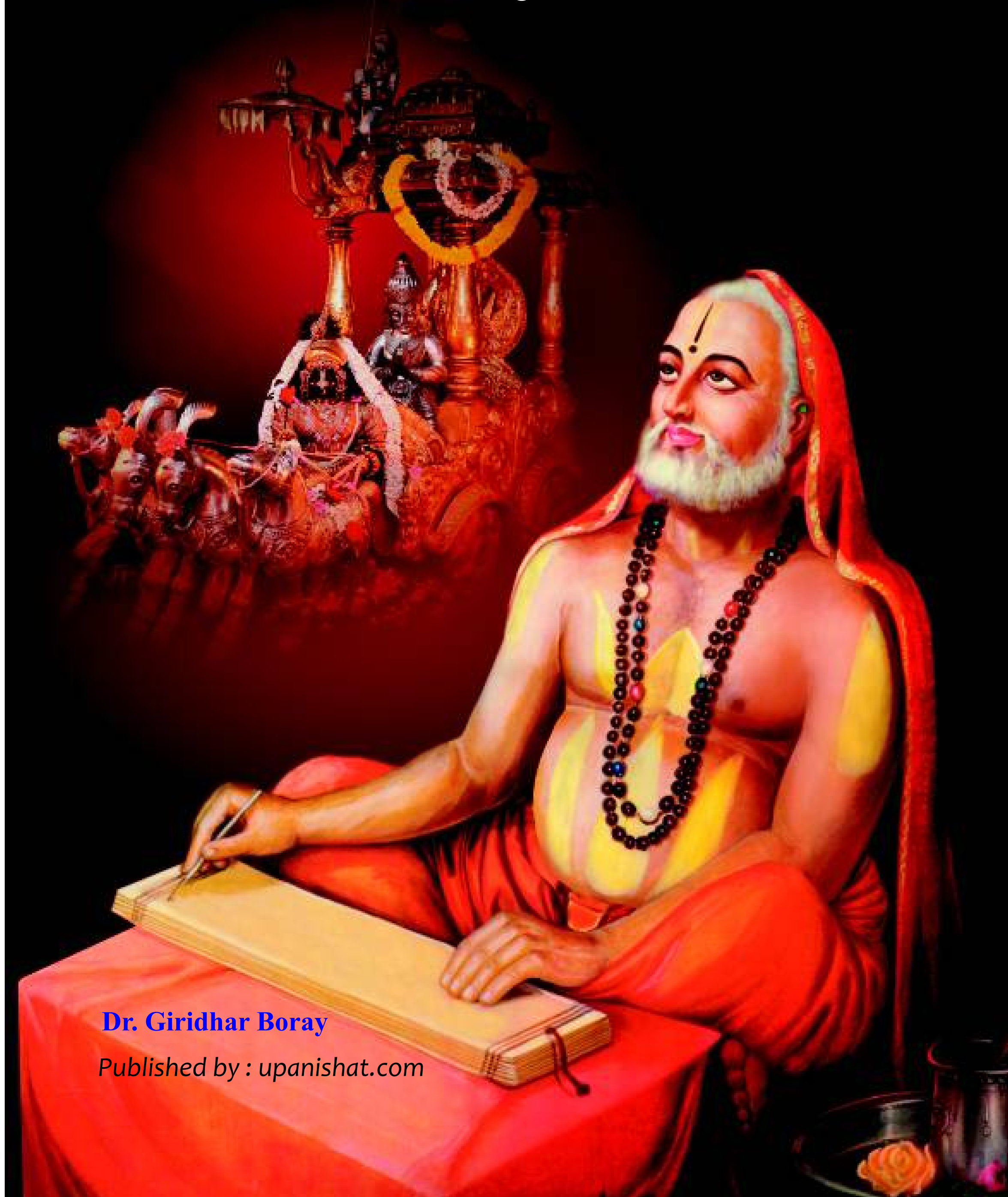
The Bhagavad Gita

Based on HH Sri Raghavendra Teertha's Gita Vivruti

&

Lectures by HH Sri Vidyasagara Madhava Teertha



Dr. Giridhar Boray

Published by : upanishat.com

The Bhagavad Gita

Based on HH Sri Raghavendra Teertha’s
Gita Vivruti

And
Lectures by HH Sri Vidyasagara Madhava Teertha

Dr. Giridhar Boray

Publisher: upanishat.com

The Bhagavad Gita
(Based on Sri Raghavendra Teertha's **Gita Vivruti**)
By Giridhar Boray

Published by: upanishat.com
(Email: gboray@gmail.com)

No. of Pages : xvi+568=584

ISBN: 978-81-928503-4-4

Printed at VAGARTHA, Hanumanthanagar, Bangalore
vagarthapress@gmail.com

श्रीवीररामो विजयते



ಜ್ಞಾನಸಾಗರ ಮಾಧವಾಂಕಿತ
ಶ್ರೀ ಶ್ರೀ 108 ಶ್ರೀ ವಿದ್ಯಾ ಸಾಗರ ಮಾಧವ ತೀರ್ಥರು
ಪೀಠಾಧಿಪತಿಗಳು
ಶ್ರೀ ಮಾಧ್ವಾಚಾರ್ಯರ ಮೂಲಮಹಾಸಂಸ್ಥಾನ
ಶ್ರೀ ಮಾಧವತೀರ್ಥರ ಶ್ರೀಮಠ
ಮಾಧವಪುರ ತಂಬಿಹಳ್ಳಿ ಕೋಲಾರ ತಾಲ್ಲೂಕು
ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ

Jnana Sagara Madhavaankita
Sri Sri 108 Sri Vidya sagara Madhava Teertharu
Peethadhipatigalu,
SrimanMadhvacharya Moola Mahasamsthana,
SrimanMadhavateerthara Sri Matha,
Madhavapura, Tambihalli, Kolar Taluk
Karnataka

मध्वार्चितं महावीरं दरस्मितं दयानिधिम् ।
तनुमध्ये लसत्खड्गं तं नमामि रघूत्तमम् ॥



Contact Number
+91-9886444687
+91-9019902717
+91-9141610716

http://madhavateerthamatha.org/

Message of Blessings

A harmonious blend of physics and metaphysics is the accomplishment of Dr Giridhar Boray's father, Professor Krishnaswamy Rao. As the father so the son. Girdhar is a computer scientist holding educational degrees from Indian and US universities. His innovations in mobile technology have brought him laurels. He is a prolific inventor in mobile and digital communication technologies, having several patents to his credit. His interest and love for Vedic literature is equally intense. His father was his teacher in this field. He has authored an eBook on The Bhagavad Gita which has had more than 50000 downloads from 90 countries. With his interest in knowing more and more on the Gita he has attended my online classes on the text and was scrupulous in taking notes with an interest to translate the holy book into English. He has completed the work.

It is exceedingly difficult to bring out the wholesome spirit of the original text into any translation. His zeal and skill both in the subject and language prove that he is not less competent in doing this job. It is a matter of joy for me if my Gita classes have helped him in this endeavour.

Many Indian youth are alienated from our culture and thinking. However, they are not too negative to come back to their mother culture. English is their friendly medium. Girdhar's book, Gita-the translated version will be especially useful to them.

Dr Girdhar, I wish, will author many more works with the same zeal.

With best wishes, Narayana

SRI VIDYA SAGARA MADHAVA TEERTHARU

Guru Vandana – Obeisance to the Teacher

I offer my respectful obeisance to His Holiness Sri Vidyasagara Madhava Teertha Swamiji, pontiff of Sri Madhava Teertha Pontificate in Karnataka, India. His Holiness is the 25th pontiff in the lineage of Sri Madhava Teertha, the 14th century ascetic and philosopher who was a direct disciple of Sri Madhwacharya, the exponent of the Dvaita (theistic dualism) school of Indian philosophy. Vishnu Shastri, a great scholar in the Advaita (theistic monism) school of philosophy in the 13th century came in contact with Sri Madhwacharya who was reviving the theistic dualism philosophy built on the fundamental premise of a clear difference between the individual soul and the Lord Almighty (the Supreme Soul). Vishnu Shastri was greatly influenced by the divine, scholarly arguments of Sri Madhwacharya and in particular his commentary on 40 selected hymns from **Rig Veda.** He became a disciple of Sri Madhwacharya and entered the monastery as Sri Madhava Teertha. He headed the Madhwa Pontificate in the 14th century. He is credited to be the only scholar to have composed rigorous commentary on all four **Vedas** based on the concepts of Dvaita philosophy. He was blessed and gifted with the beautiful idol of Lord Sri Veera Rama by Sri Madhwacharya, and this idol continues to be worshipped to this day by the reigning pontiff.

The reigning pontiff HH Sri Vidyasagara Madhava Teertha was born on the most auspicious *Ananta Chaturdashi* day of 1932 to very pious parents, in the illustrious lineage of HH Sri Kambaluru Ramachandra Teertha of the glorious Sri Vyasaraja Math. He was named Venkatesha. He was groomed into every aspect of

Sri Madhwa's philosophy from his childhood days by his father who was also a great scholar. He had a brilliant academic record, securing a master's degree in Literature followed by a Doctorate in the *Mahabharata* from Karnataka University. He chose teaching as his career and served as Professor and Principal of The Government's Arts College in the state of Andhra Pradesh.

After retiring from active service, he was invited to be the Principal of Sri Guru Sarvabhowma Samskruta Vidyapeeta at Mantralayam where he served at the divine feet of Sri Raghavendra Swamy. Pleased by his service, within a year, Sri Raghavendra Swamy chose him to lead the pontificate of Sri Madhava Teertha Moola Samsthana math, resulting in an invitation to him by the then pontiff Sri Prasanna Shoora Madhavateertha. He was named Sri Vidyasagara Madhavateertha and he has been serving the pontificate for over 19 years performing daily worship to the most sacred Sri Veera Rama idol with great devotion and dedication. An erudite scholar with proficiency in many aspects of literature, arts, and mastery over many languages, HH has composed many devotional songs in Kannada which bring out his emotional relationship with the Lord Almighty. HH observes strict austerities for ascetics as laid down by Sri Madhwacharya and is an ideal seer in every sense. Under his stewardship the pontificate has made great strides and attracts a large number of loyal, committed followers.

Due to Divine Providence I got the opportunity to attend the daily lectures conducted by His Holiness on **Gita Vivruti**, a commentary on the **Bhagavad Gita** by the 16th century ascetic and philosopher

Sri Raghavendra Teertha which is based on the commentary by Sri Madhwacharya and Sri Jaya Teertha. HH graciously supported and blessed my effort (a feeble attempt!) to capture in English, the essence of Sri Raghavendra Teertha's **Gita Vivruti** and his lectures which were in Kannada, to benefit a larger audience. I respectfully offer this work to His Holiness as Guru Dakshina and seek his blessings.

वीररामपदासक्तं विरक्तिज्ञानवारिधिम् । विद्यावन्तं गुरुं वन्दे
विद्यासागरयोगिनम् ।।

Acknowledgements

The author is greatly indebted to HH Sri Vidyasagara Madhava Teertha Swamiji, the head of Sri Madhava Teertha pontificate for his detailed teachings on the core concepts of The **Bhagavad Gita** based on the interpretation of Sri Madhwacharya, Sri Jaya Teertha and Sri Raghavendra Teertha. His Holiness delivered his lectures in daily classes spread over 167 days in the middle of the lockdown during the pandemic of 2020. HH reviewed many drafts of this book and offered many corrections to sharpen the message. HH has constantly encouraged and blessed this author in the successful completion of this book. I have also benefitted greatly in my understanding of the **Gita** from the works of great Madhwa seers and scholars such as HH Sri Vidyadeesha Teertha of Palimaru Mutt and Dr. V. Prabhanjanacharya. I am eternally grateful to my late parents Smt. Indira Bai and Sri B.A. Krishnaswamy Rao for inculcating Vaishnavite principles and values in me during my early childhood. This work is dedicated to the memory of my parents.

The author has also benefited greatly from the feedback and comments from fellow classmates who attended the **Gita** sessions by HH. In particular, Sri Niranjan Rao undertook a painstaking review of the entire manuscript and offered many key corrections and updates to ensure fidelity and consistency in the concepts. I am extremely grateful to Sri Niranjan Rao, himself an accomplished scholar and author on the works of Sri Madhwacharya. I am greatly indebted to my niece Smt. Prabha Venkatesh for her multiple, extensive reviews and comments to improve the grammar, presentation, and readability.

My thanks to Sri Sameerachar and Sri D.R. Seetharaman for their review and feedback. Thanks are due to my siblings Smt. Jayashree Satyendra, Sri Gopinath Boray and my friend Sri Krishna Kashyap for proof reading and review comments. I greatly appreciate the efforts by artists Sri Seshagiri and my sister Smt. Pratima Hariprasad for the excellent cover painting. I am also thankful to Sri S.N. Ramesha for typesetting the Sanskrit verses and to Team Vagartha Printers for excellent typesetting, layout and printing. And last, but not least, I am thankful to my wife Smt. Sudha, son Sameer, parents in law Smt. Usha and Sri Yadavamoorthy and my extended family for their support and understanding.

February 27, 2021
(*Vyasa Poornima*) Giridhar Boray

Contents

* * *

Introduction - Background and Battleground

Over centuries, the **Bhagavad Gita** has been considered an important spiritual guidebook and has influenced many thought leaders in human history. The **Gita** is a conversational poem and is part of the great Indian epic the **Mahabharata**, which is a story about the families of two brothers who inherit a kingdom from their father. These cousins are known as the 'Pandavas' and the 'Kauravas'. The Kaurava brothers are 100 in number and the Pandavas are 5. The Kauravas, not wanting to share the kingdom with their cousins invite them to a game of dice. They use dubious means to defeat the Pandavas and annex their kingdom after winning the wager. As per the rules of the wager, the Pandavas complete their stay outside the kingdom and come back to ask for their fair share of the kingdom so that they can rule with dignity. The Kauravas refuse to honor the agreement and even deny the Pandavas a settlement of 5 villages so that they can live in peace. As the Kauravas refuse to budge even an inch, the Pandavas have no choice but to declare war on them to get back their share of the kingdom. During this period, The Lord who had incarnated as Krishna offers the cousins a choice between His army and Himself. But He makes it clear that He Himself would not be participating in the war. The Kauravas choose His army as Krishna would not be fighting, and the Pandavas are happy to just have Krishna on their side. Krishna takes on the role of charioteer to Arjuna's chariot (Arjuna is the middle brother among the five Pandavas).

Before the war starts, the two armies assemble on the battlefield, facing each other. At this point, Arjuna requests Krishna to place his chariot in the middle so that he can get a full view of the warring forces. Since this is a war between cousins, Arjuna sees his cousins, uncles, grandfathers, great grandfathers, nephews, friends, classmates etc. on both sides. He is overcome with emotion and grief at the prospect of bloodshed among his family and friends for the sake of a kingdom. He declares his intention to renounce the war and let the Kauravas keep the kingdom, thus abdicating his responsibility as a prince and a warrior. It is at this stage that Krishna teaches him the **Gita** which is structured as a series of questions from Arjuna and answers from Krishna. Krishna extols the virtues of performing one's duties regardless of the outcome, and not avoid performing prescribed duties which may be difficult and unpleasant. As Krishna starts to talk to Arjuna on the virtues of doing one's work (in this case Arjuna needing to fight a rightful war), Arjuna asks a series of questions on the bigger issues of life, individual souls, the Lord Almighty, the universe, the circle of life etc., for which Krishna provides clear, unambiguous answers. He finally convinces Arjuna that his fears were unfounded and that he should fight to free the Kingdom from the Kauravas and provide a just and compassionate administration to his citizens.

At first it would appear that a battleground is hardly the place for someone to be preaching philosophy. However, many of the questions that we have in life are about the choices we make, especially in challenging times. It is interesting to note that Sanskrit verses lend themselves to multiple meanings and in one interpretation,

the battleground in the **Gita** is compared to the human body (and mind), and the battle between the Pandavas and the Kauravas is compared to the constant strife between good and evil thoughts that we encounter on a daily basis. The **Gita** is indeed a teaching for all of us, with Arjuna acting as an example of an individual at crossroads, desperately looking for guidance and support.

The **Gita** is one of the most widely read and commented upon spiritual works in human history. There are several excellent books on it in various languages. Given that the original work is in Sanskrit, most of the scholarly commentaries have been in Sanskrit or other Indian languages which are closer to Sanskrit. To read and comprehend many of them, one would need some training in Indian spiritual studies as many of them liberally use Sanskrit words albeit transliterated in English. It was felt that there is a need to present the key concepts of The **Gita** in plain English for everyday folk, minimizing the use of Sanskrit words. These observations led to the development of this manuscript.

While there are many learned commentaries on the **Gita** written over the centuries, this author has been greatly influenced by the authoritative commentary and lucid explanations of difficult concepts by Sri Madhwacharya, the 12th century ascetic who propounded the philosophy of dualistic theism (concept of difference between the almighty Lord and individual souls at all times and places). Sri Madhwacharya's commentary has been further elaborated and summarized by later day savants such as Sri Padmanabha Teertha (13th Century), Sri Jaya Teertha (13th Century) Sri Vadiraja Teertha (16th

Century), Sri Raghavendra Teertha (17th century) and others.

The **Gita** consists of 18 chapters with a total of 701[1] verses in Sanskrit. The **Gita** is part of the great Hindu epic **The Mahabharata** and appears as Chapters 25 to 42, in the Book of Bheeshma in the **Mahabharata**. Most of the verses appear in the *anushtap* meter, where each verse has a total of 32 letters with 8 words in each of the four quadrants. Some verses in the 15th chapter appear in *trishtup* meter with 44 words. As per Sri Raghavendra Teertha [GV], the 18 chapters can be broadly classified into 3 sections with 6 chapters in each section. The first section with chapters 1-6 (280 verses) broadly outlines how one can obtain divine, spiritual knowledge (*jnana upaya*), the second section with chapters 7-12 (209 verses) focuses on devotion and divine, spiritual knowledge (vi*jnana*) that leads one to liberation, and the third section consisting of chapters 13-18 (212 verses) elaborates on the concepts in the first two sections. It is also believed that the **Gita** conveys at least 10 different meanings, all of which are consistent with one another. An illustration of multiple meanings in the **Gita** will appear in Chapter 2. It is also said that the **Gita** has 3 major interpretations – historical, psychological, and spiritual.

The Gita and the Number 18

Numbers and numerology play an incredibly significant role in Indian theology. In fact, the study of knowledge is termed '*Sankhya Yoga'*, with *Sankhya* meaning 'arithmetic'. The world around us is based on numbers. We are

1 Some texts of Gita indicate a total of 700 verses (omitting the first verse attributed to Arjuna in Chapter 13)

constantly measuring, managing, quantifying all our activities with the aid of numbers. We wake up at a certain time, we work/study for certain hours, we travel a certain distance, we consume some amount of food, we transact with certain currency, we perform activities at a certain time, on a certain day, in a certain month, in a certain year etc. And all these numbers and calculations are based on the position and movement of celestial objects such as the Sun, Moon, stars etc.

The number 18 is very special in the **Gita**. Note that every letter has a numerical equivalent based on the position of that letter in the Sanskrit alphabet which has 16 vowels, 25 consonants and 10 semi vowels. Let us review the numerical equivalent for the word '*jaya*' (meaning victory) which is made up of the letters *ja* (consonant in the 8th position) and *ya* (1st semi vowel). Applying the grammatical rule of reading the numerical representations in reverse order, the word '*jaya*' is represented by number 18. *Jaya* which means victory, signifies the triumph of good over evil as depicted in the **Gita** and its parent epic, **The Mahabharata**. Now let us review the significance of number 18 in the **Gita** with the following facts [SBG]-

1. The Gita has 18 chapters.
2. The **Mahabharata** of which **the Gita** is a part, has 18 volumes.
3. The great war of the **Mahabharata** which was the backdrop for the **Gita** was fought over 18 days.
4. The armies consisted of 18 regiments with the Kauravas at 11 and the Pandavas at 7

5. Each regiment consisted of 21870 elephants, 21870 chariots, 65610 horses and 109350 soldiers. Each of these numbers sum up to 18. For example, in case of 21870, 2+1+8+7+0 = 18
6. Duryodhana in his review of the Pandava army names 18 main leaders
7. Sanjaya names the 18 conches sounded by the 18 Pandava leaders.
8. In the **Gita** chapter 10, the Lord describes His divine manifestation (*Vibhuti Roopa*) in 18 verses (10.21 to 10.38)
9. The Lord Almighty's omnipresence in the universe is described via His 18 forms starting with Hamsa, in **Katha Upanishad** (2.2.2), which is the basis for many concepts in the **Gita.**

Overview of Gita Chapters

The **Gita** has 18 chapters, each of which focusses on a specific topic and at the same time builds upon the topics covered in previous chapters. An enumeration of the chapters and a brief description of the contents of each chapter are as follows:

Section 1: The Path to Divine Knowledge, Chapters 1 – 6 (280 verses)

Chapter 1 (47 verses) - *Arjuna Vishada Yoga* (Arjuna's Distress): This chapter sets the stage for the **Gita.** The two armies of cousins, Pandavas and Kauravas were assembled in Kurukshetra ready to start the war. The proceedings in the war were narrated by Sanjaya, an aide

to the blind king Dhrutarashtra, father of the Kaurava brothers. Before the start of the war, Arjuna looks at both the armies and realizes that on both sides were many of his near and dear ones such as teachers, cousins, uncles, nephews etc. He develops cold feet at the thought of bloodshed between them. He wonders if he is doing the right thing by waging this war as it would not only lead to bloodshed but also result in societal degradation. He advances many arguments as to why he should avoid this war and find some other way to lead his life. At the end of this chapter, Arjuna who is grief stricken is seen sitting still in his chariot after dropping his weapons, confused as to the way forward.

Chapter 2 (72 verses) - *Sankhya Yoga* (The Path of Doctrines): In this chapter, the Lord answers Arjuna's basic questions about the purpose of life and related philosophical concepts. Sensing that Arjuna's reservations about fighting the war were due to his fear of losing his loved ones, the Lord delves into the nature of individual souls, the indestructibility of souls, the relationship between individual souls and the Lord Almighty etc., to remind Arjuna that the Lord gave human forms to individual souls to help them in their spiritual journey, and everyone must play their dutiful role in society. The Lord urges Arjuna not to despair over the hurt that may be caused to his loved ones in the war, as they had taken the side of the evil king Duryodhana. Arjuna had an obligation to fight the just war to protect his citizens. Lord Krishna teaches Arjuna to focus on performing his prescribed duty of protecting his citizens as an offering to Him and not let his emotions come in the way. Chapter 2 can be considered a summary of the entire **Gita** as it

answers Arjuna's (and through Arjuna, everyone's) basic questions about the purpose of life. The remaining chapters serve to expand on the concepts presented in this chapter.

Chapter 3 (43 verses) - *Karma Yoga* (The Path of Action): In this chapter, the Lord answers Arjuna's questions regarding the paths of duty (*karma*) and knowledge (*jnana*). Arjuna wonders if there was a way, he could focus on acquiring knowledge and traverse the path of knowledge (*jnana*) avoiding this dreadful war. The Lord logically answers Arjuna's doubts to convince him that everyone has an obligation to perform their duties to society and as a prince, it was his responsibility to fight the just war to protect his citizens. To perform one's duty, one also needs to be equipped with knowledge and in that sense, one needs to incorporate both *karma* and *jnana* in one's spiritual journey. Based on one's innate nature, some may be prescribed a path that is dominant in action, and others may be prescribed a path dominant in knowledge. This chapter also has an excellent discussion on the Cyclic Order of the Universe.

Chapter 4 (42 verses) - *Jnana Yoga* (Wisdom in Action): This chapter is predominantly about the spiritual knowledge that a seeker will need to perform prescribed action (*karma*). Knowledge regarding the individual souls, various deities and the attributes of the Lord are explained to instill devotion in a seeker. The Lord explains that He incarnates in this world from time to time to establish virtue and vanquish immorality. Knowledge about the various types of actions – right action, wrong action and non-action are also covered here.

Chapter 5 (29 verses) - *Sanyasa Yoga* (The Path of Renunciation): Renunciation of rewards from actions is

termed *sanyasa,* and performing prescribed duties as an offering to the Lord is termed *yoga* (action). In this chapter, the Lord answers Arjuna's questions on some fundamental aspects of the two concepts of *sanyasa* and *yoga*. Arjuna's argument would be that if renunciation were a better option than action, he could perhaps adopt the life of an ascetic and avoid waging the war. The Lord however describes the characteristics of a renunciant and clarifies that one must incorporate both these paths to achieve self-realization. The Lord reiterates that Arjuna must focus on performing his prescribed duty of waging war to protect his citizens from the evil Kauravas. This chapter also delves into the importance of detachment and self-control.

Chapter 6 (47 verses) – *Atma Samyama Yoga* (The Path of Self Restraint) or *Dhyana Yoga* (The Path of Meditation): *Yoga* (or action) has two components – external and internal. The external component refers to actions performed as part of one's prescribed duties which would be visible to others. The internal component refers to *dhyana* (or meditation). This chapter has a detailed discussion of *dhyana yoga*. Characteristics of a true *yogi* are described. The physical aspect of meditation such as place, physical pose, breath control etc., are also described. Requirements for moderation in consumption are also discussed. To a question from Arjuna regarding the condition of those who make a sincere attempt but are not able to successfully implement *karma* and *dhyana*, the Lord teaches that no sincere effort is a waste, and such seekers will get additional opportunities to complete their spiritual journey.

Section 2: Divine, Spiritual Knowledge, Chapters 7 – 12 (209 verses)

Chapter 7 (30 verses) - *Jnana Vijnana Yoga* (The Path of Knowledge and Wisdom): The first 6 chapters were broadly concerned with descriptions of the methods and procedures (both external and internal) to acquire divine, spiritual knowledge. The next 6 chapters describe in more detail such divine, spiritual knowledge about the Lord Almighty, which forms the principle message of the **Gita.** In earlier chapters 2 – 6, there were some discussions on the Lord's attributes which were included contextually, but the next 6 chapters provide more exclusive details about the Lord' attributes. Chapter 7 provides a detailed discussion of the two types of knowledge – indirect (ordinary knowledge) and direct (special knowledge or wisdom). Indirect knowledge (*jnana*) is that knowledge which is gained from scriptural studies and through teachers. Direct knowledge (*vijnana*) is specialized knowledge about the Lord that one obtains after self-realization. The Lord describes His ownership of everything in the universe and stresses that He is responsible for even the intrinsic attributes of objects. The causes of ignorance, influence of *maya* (delusion) on living beings, and procedures to overcome *maya* are also discussed. The various types of seekers who are devoted to the Lord are identified. This chapter ends with the Lord stating that one who has proper knowledge about *Adhiyajna* (Lord of Sacrifice) and *Adhyatma* (Prime Self), along with that of *Adhibhoota* (Prime Material) and *Adhidaiva* (Prime Deities), and who thinks of Him during the last moments will eventually reach Him.

Chapter 8 (28 verses) - *Akshara Brahma Yoga* (The Imperishable Lord): This chapter starts with Arjuna asking Krishna 8 questions about the topics indicated towards the end of the previous chapter. Arjuna also enquires about the need for, and advantages of remembering the Lord during one's last moments. This chapter also details the journey of a soul after leaving the physical body.

Chapter 9 (34 verses) - *Raja Vidya, Raja Guhya Yoga* (Path of Supreme Knowledge and Supreme Secrets): This chapter continues with the description of some of the important and subtle attributes and activities of the Lord. In that sense it is Supreme knowledge that is taught here. The Lord uses the term 'secretive' to arouse curiosity in Arjuna (and everyone else). While the Lord has infinite auspicious forms, attributes, activities etc., there are eight activities of the Lord that directly impact living beings. They are – creation (*Srishti*), sustenance (*Stithi)*, dissolution (laya), regulation (*niayamana*), knowledge (*jnana*), ignorance (*ajnana*), bondage (*bandha*) and liberation (*moksha*). Together they are called *Janmadi ashtaka* and they are also covered in this chapter.

Chapter 10 (42 verses) - *Vibhooti Yoga* (Divine Manifestations): No one can fully comprehend the Lord's infinite, auspicious attributes. The Lord, who is responsible for the creation, sustenance and dissolution of the universe, powers everyone and everything. The Lord answers Arjuna's questions about His manifestations and presence in superior entities. The Lord's special presence among both sentient beings (such as various deities, animals) and inert objects (such as mountains, rivers, stars, weapons) bestows superiority on these entities. Divine manifestations

are of two types – direct, where the Lord incarnates in different forms such as Rama, Krishna, Vedavyasa etc., and intrinsic, where the Lord's special presence in some objects gives them superiority over other objects (ex: Meru's superiority among mountains, Ganges's superiority among rivers).

Chapter 11 (55 verses) - *Vishwa Roopa Darshanam* (The Lord's Universal Form): Arjuna, after learning about the Lord's innumerable manifestations, requests the Lord to allow him to see His Universal Form and is granted divine vision by Him. Arjuna's sees the Lord having the brightness of thousands of suns, pervading the entire universe with infinite limbs, faces with no beginning or end etc. The Lord's infinite forms are as real as the universe. This chapter also has a soulful prayer by Arjuna on seeing the Lord's Universal Form. While the Lord had previously taught Arjuna about His greatness and attributes, the act of physically seeing the Lord's Universal Form completely solidifies Arjuna's faith in Sri Krishna's teachings.

Chapter 12 (20 verses) - *Bhakti Yoga* (The Path of Devotion): The Lord answers Arjuna's questions comparing the worship of Goddess Mahalakshmi and that of the Lord Almighty Narayana. Worshipping Lord Narayana is an easier way to attain *moksha,* as pleasing Mahalakshmi is difficult. Further, Sri Lakshmi operates under the Lord's control. One should propitiate Sri Lakshmi and other deities as part of the Lord's entourage for maximum effect. *Bhakti* or devotion is focusing one's mind on the Lord. The Lord teaches other ways of devotion using facilities such as intellect, studying scriptures, performing prescribed duties etc. The last 8 verses describe the characteristics of an ideal devotee who is dear to the Lord.

Section 3: Reiteration of Concepts in Sections 1 and 2, Chapters 13 – 18 (212 verses)

Chapter 13 (35 verses) - *Kshetra Kshetrajna Yoga* (The Field and the Knower of the Field): The first section covered the tools and utilities to acquire Divine knowledge which itself was covered in detail in the second section. This third section expands on some of the critical issues briefly covered in the first two sections. In chapter 7, verse (7.4), the Lord had briefly spoken about eight-fold nature which operates under His command and control. This chapter details that field or theatre of operations and the one who knows them. The interaction between the components of nature (sentient and inert) and living beings are also discussed.

Chapter 14 (27 verses) - *Gunatraya Vibhaga Yoga* (Division of Qualities): This chapter has details on the three qualities of nature (*sattv* – piety, *rajas* – passion, *tamas* – ignorance) which define one's personality. These concepts were introduced in chapter 3 (3.5) and are expanded here. Creation of the universe through sentient Mother Nature is described. The ways in which the three qualities bind a person are also explained. The method to escape from the clutches of the three qualities are described.

Chapter 15 (20 verses) - *Purushottama Yoga* (Theology of the Supreme Being): This chapter is considered by many to have the core teachings of the **Gita.** The **Bhagavad Gita** has 700 verses spread among 18 chapters. Interestingly, this chapter which has 20 verses has 700 letters (15 verses have 32 letters each and the remaining 5 verses have 44 letters each)! This gives credence to this

chapter's importance based on numerology. While the Lord had previously described the components of the universe such as living beings, inert objects, and the Lord Almighty, in this chapter the Lord illustrates the interrelations among them using the example of a banyan tree. In verse 15, the Lord explicitly states His presence in everyone and declares that He is the primary subject matter of the **Vedas**. In verses 16-20, the Lord emphatically describes Himself as the Supreme Being intrinsically different from all other beings, thereby convincingly establishing the philosophy of dualism (*dvaita*) which was propagated by Sri Madhwacharya.

Chapter 16 (24 verses) - *Daivasura Sampat Vibhaga Yoga* (The Divine and the Demoniac Nature): This chapter delves deep into the types of human nature. In previous chapters, there were many references to pious, virtuous people with divine nature and to people with demoniac nature. This chapter provides more details on human traits. These traits typically are intrinsic to an individual. One cannot judge people based on external appearance, position in society etc. The personality traits of people with divine nature and those with demoniac nature are described in detail.

Chapter 17 (28 verses) - *Shraddhatraya Vibhaga Yoga* (The Threefold Faith): In previous chapters, especially chapter 14, the nature of individuals influenced by the qualities of *sattv*, *rajas, tamas* were stated a number of times. This chapter has more details on the concept of threefold faith with detailed discussion on the impact of these qualities on various issues such as faith, food habits, sacrificial rituals, charitable giving, meditation etc.

Chapter 18 (78 verses) - *Mokshasanyasa Yoga* (Liberation and Renunciation): This chapter starts with a discussion on the subtle differences between renunciation (*sanyasa*) and relinquishment of the rewards of labour (*tyaga*). The types of rewards from actions are also discussed. The five prerequisites required in performing activity are identified. Different types of knowledge, action, doers, intellect, determination, and happiness are also discussed. Additional details on the four societal categories of people are provided (this was briefly indicated in (4.13)). The concept of liberation (*moksha*) is discussed in detail in this chapter. The first 55 verses contain a discussion on the topics identified so far. The Lord concludes His sermon in the next 17 verses. Arjuna responds to Lord Krishna's teachings in verse 73. Sanjaya, who has been describing the proceedings in the war and the Lord's glorious expounding of *dharma* (The **Gita)** to Arjuna, euphorically concludes his commentary in the following 5 verses.

Organization of the Book

This book is primarily based on the interpretation of the **Gita** by Sri Raghavendra Swamy (Sri Rayaru) in his pioneering work, **Gita Vivruti**. Vivruti means 'explanation' and in the **Gita Vivruti**, Sri Rayaru has consolidated unique interpretations on the **Gita** by Sri Madhwacharya (in his works **Gita Bhashya, Gita Tatparya Nirnaya)** and also commentaries on these two works by Sri Jaya Teertha (**Prameya Deepika** and **Nyaya Deepika). Gita Bhashya** is the very first work of Sri Madhwacharya, where he provided a unique interpretation of **the Gita**. In a subsequent work, **Gita Tatparya Nirnaya**,

Sri Madhwacharya provides detailed arguments and the scriptural basis for many of the interpretations in **Gita Bhashya**.

This book has 18 main chapters with each chapter corresponding to the relevant chapter in the **Gita.** In each chapter, the book presents the original Sanskrit verse along with a simple translation in English. At the end of the original text, an explanation of key concepts covered in the chapter is provided, based on authentic commentaries on the **Gita** by Sri Raghavendra Teertha (Sri Rayaru) in his work **Gita Vivruti** and on lectures by Sri Vidyasagara Madhava Teertha. At the end of each chapter, a summary of that chapter is provided. The summary section also refers to relevant verses in that chapter for clarity, and this section can be read 'stand alone' by those readers who want a quick summary of the various chapters. It is hoped that the readers will find this version useful in better understanding the greatest psychological manual ever written – **The Bhagavad Gita**.

Sri Vishnu Teertha from Madinur, a great saint philosopher from the 18th century has identified one verse from each chapter of the **Gita** as a representation of the core tenets of that entire chapter in his work **Bhagavad Gita Saroddhara**. This was done to help devotees who wanted to chant the **Gita** everyday but could not chant all 700 verses. These core verses are highlighted in this book in italics.

This book has 3 annexures. The first annexure contains a section from the epic **Varaha Purana** which describes the glory of **The Gita** and is typically read after completing a reading of **the Gita.** The second annexure has a

discussion on the philosophical interpretation of the **Gita** with a sample illustration. The third annexure is about the core tenets of the philosophy of Sri Madhwacharya and the corresponding verses in the **Gita** that support these tenets.

The last section of this book identifies literature cited in this book. The principal references are the source of the **Gita**, namely the great epic **Mahabharata** and commentaries on the **Gita** by Sri Madhwacharya, Sri Jaya Teertha and Sri Raghavendra Teertha. The references are indicated by their initials within square brackets. For example, the **Gita Bhashya** is identified as [GB].

प्रथमोऽध्यायः – अर्जुनविषादयोगः
Chapter 1 – Arjuna's Distress

मङ्गल श्लोकः

ॐ देवं नारायणं नत्वा सर्वदोषविवर्जितम् ।

परिपूर्णं गुरूंश्चान् गीतार्थं वक्ष्यामि लेषतः ।।

devaṃ nārāyaṇaṃ natvā sarvadoṣa vivarjītaṃ
paripūrṇaṃ gurūṃścāṇ gītārthaṃ vakṣyāmi leśataḥ

Benedictory Verse (Gita Bhashya) : Salutations to the Lord and teacher Narayana (Vedavyasa) who is revealed by the **Gita**. He is ever devoid of defects such as dependence and ignorance. He is not limited by time, space, and attributes. (Even though the **Gita** is full of many meanings, only a simple meaning is given here to aid general readers).

ॐ लक्ष्मीनारायणं नत्वा पूर्णभोधान् गुरूनपि ।

कुर्मः श्रीकृष्णगीताया भाष्याद्युक्तार्थसंग्रहम् ।।

lakṣmī nārāyaṇaṃ natva pūrṇabhodan gurūnapi
kūrmaha śrīkṛṣṇa gītayā bhāshyaadyuktartha saṃgrahaṃ

Benedictory Verse (Gita Vivruti) : After saluting Lord Narayana (consort of Lakshmi), Sri Madhwacharya, and other teachers, we are summarizing the concepts from **Gita Bhashya, Gita Tatparya Nirnaya** and related commentaries which offer a unique perspective on the **Bhagavad Gita** taught by Lord Sri Krishna.

Chapter Introduction: Sri Vedavyasa composed the great epic **Mahabharata** which contains all the essential teachings from the **Vedas** and this allows even those who

do not have access or eligibility to learn the **Vedas** to gain necessary knowledge to help them in their spiritual journey. The epic **Mahabharata** is spread over 18 volumes and the **Bhagavad Gita** (or **Gita,** in short), is part of *Bheeshma Parva* (or the Book of Bheeshma). The **Mahabharata** is compared to the divine flower *parijata,* and the **Gita** is like the nectar (or essence) of this flower. Sri Raghavendra Teertha (Sri Rayaru) has composed a unique commentary on the **Git**a titled, **Gita Vivruti** [GV] which is a summary of the two commentaries on the **Gita** by Sri Madhwacharya namely, **Gita Bhashya** [GB] and **Gita Tatparya Nirnaya** [GTN]. The **Gita** has 701 verses spread over 18 chapters. Sri Rayaru has organized these 18 chapters into 3 sections of 6 chapters each. The first section (chapters 1-6) broadly describes the processes and prerequisites required to achieve divine, spiritual knowledge that one would need in one's spiritual journey. The second section (chapters 7-12), describes the nature of such divine, spiritual knowledge and the third section (chapters 13-18) expands on some of the key concepts covered in sections 1 and 2.

The Bhagavad Gita is a conversation between Arjuna, and Lord Krishna as narrated by Lord Vedavyasa in the epic, **Mahabharata**. The great war between the armies of the Kaurava and Pandava cousins, was witnessed by Sanjaya, aide of the blind King Dhrutarashtra who was head of the Kaurava dynasty. Sanjaya rushes to Dhrutarashtra soon after the fall of Bheeshma, the commander of the Kaurava army [**Mahabharata**, Bheeshma Parva, Chapter 13]. The stunned Dhrutarashtra wants to know everything that happened on the battlefield

from the very beginning. Sanjaya narrates all the events from the beginning of the war. He stays with the king till the end of the war relaying all the events to him. He is able to do this because Sage Vedavyasa grants him divine vision to remotely view the war and provide him the updates.

All 47 verses in the first chapter and the first 10 verses in the second chapter provide the background and context for Arjuna's apprehensions about the war, and Lord Krishna starts His sermon to Arjuna then onwards.

Dhrutarashtra starts by asking the following question to Sanjaya.

What did my Clan and the Pandavas do in Kurukshetra?

धृतराष्ट्र उवाच –
धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे समवेता युयुत्सवः ।
मामकाः पाण्डवाश्चैव किमकुर्वत संञ्जय ॥ १ ॥
dhṛtarāṣṭra uvāca
dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre samavetā yuyutsavaḥ
māmakāḥ pāṇḍavāś cai 'va kim akurvata sañjaya

Dhrutarashtra said:

O Sanjaya! Assembled at Kuru Kshetra, the designated land for committing righteous acts (Field of Righteousness), what did my clan of Kauravas and Pandavas do? (1.1)

Comments: The first verse in the **Gita** starts with King Dhrutarashtra asking the above question to his aide Sanjaya. The first word here is '*Dharma*' which is one of

the names of the Lord Almighty who shoulders (*dharana*) the universe. In that sense, the first verse also acts as a benedictory verse for the **Gita**.

The King begins by asking Sanjaya what happened between his clan (Kauravas) and the Pandavas in Kurukshetra which was known as *Dharma Kshetra* or the 'Field of Righteousness'. This question reveals the King's apprehensions. He was convinced that the Pandavas with the guidance of Lord Krishna would be invincible (but Krishna had sworn not to take up arms). On the other hand, Bheeshma was also known to be invincible and so the King hoped against hope that his sons would not be defeated in this war that was being fought in an area known as the 'Field of Righteousness'. Hence, he was surprised to hear that Bheeshma had fallen.

Sri Madinur Vishnu Teertha Swamiji in his work **Bhagavad Gita Saroddhara** [BGS] identifies this verse as the central piece of chapter 1. After all, chapter 1 sets the context for the entire **Gita** and it begins with King Dhrutarashtra's question. The theatre of war is our body, and the armies represent the angelic and demoniac forces inside each of us. The interaction between them is the context for the **Gita.**

Duryodhana's Apprehension

संजय उवाच –

दृष्ट्वातु पाण्डवानीकं व्यूढं दुर्योधनस्तदा ।
आचार्यमुपसंगम्य राजा वचनमब्रवीत् ।। २ ।।

sañjaya uvāca
dṛṣṭvā tu pāṇḍavānīkaṁ vyūḍhaṁ duryodhanas tadā
ācāryam upasaṅgamya rājā vacanam abravīt

Sanjaya said:

King Duryodhana, upon seeing the formation of the Pandavas' army, immediately rushed to his teacher Drona and said as follows. (1.2)

Comments*:* Sanjaya answers Dhrutarashtra's question in the following 9 verses. Sri Sumateendra Teertha in his **Bhava Ratna Kosha** [BRK] draws attention to the use of the word '*tu*' as implying Duryodhana's anxiety as soon as he saw the formidable Pandava army ('*tu*' is normally used to add emphasis). Hence, the Karurava prince immediately rushes to his teacher Drona. It is interesting to note that Duryodhana approaches his teacher Drona and not the commander of the Kaurava forces, Bheeshma, to give him information about the Pandava army, perhaps to acknowledge the fact that many warriors in the Pandava army were Drona's students.

पश्यैतां पाण्डुपुत्राणामाचार्य महतीं चमूम् ।
व्यूढां द्रुपदपुत्रेण तव शिष्येण धीमता ॥ ३ ॥
paśyaitāṁ pāṇḍuputrāṇām ācārya mahatīṁ camūm
vyūḍhāṁ drupadaputreṇa tava śiṣyeṇa dhīmatā

O My Teacher! Look at the formation of the mighty army of Pandavas which has been organized by your clever student Dhrushtadyumna, son of Drupada. (1.3)

Comments: Duryodhana reminds Drona that the formation of the Pandava army has been organized by

Dhrushtadyumna, a brilliant warrior who learnt the art of warfare from Drona himself, implying that the Pandavas have a really formidable army formation. Duryodhana also refers to the Pandavas' army as mighty, even though his own army was much bigger.

अत्र शूरा महेष्वासा भीमार्जुनसमा युधि ।
युयुधानो विराटश्च द्रुपदश्च महारथः ॥ ४ ॥
atra śūrā maheṣvāsā bhīmārjunasamā yudhi
yuyudhāno virāṭaś ca drupadaś ca mahārathaḥ

धृष्टकेतुश्चेकितानः काशिराजश्च वीर्यवान् ।
पुरुजित् कुन्तिभोजश्च शैब्यश्च नरपुङ्गवः ॥ ५ ॥
dhṛṣṭaketuś cekitānaḥ kāśirājaś ca vīryavān
purujit kuntibhojaś ca śaibyaś ca narapungavaḥ

युधामन्युश्च विक्रान्त उत्तमौजाश्च वीर्यवान् ।
सौभद्रो द्रौपदेयाश्च सर्व एव महारथाः ॥ ६ ॥
yudhāmanyuś ca vikrānta uttamaujāś ca vīryavān
saubhadro draupadeyāś ca sarva eva mahārathāḥ

Possessing heavy weapons are the brave warriors Yuyudhana (Satyaki), Virata, and King Drupada, all *Maharathas*. They are as capable as Bheema and Arjuna (1.4)

Other brave warriors include Drushtaketu, Chekitana, Kashiraja who is extraordinarily strong, Purujit, Kuntibhoja and Shybhya who is superior among men. (1.5)

Yudhamanyu the brave warrior, Uttamowja the strong warrior, Abhimanyu, son of Subhadra, and sons of Draupadi are also here. They too are *Maharathas.* (1.6)

Comments: Duryodhana recognizes and names 18 leaders from the Pandava army whom he considers as being comparable to Bheema and Arjuna in valor. They are – Dhrushtadyumna, Satyaki, Virata, Drupada, Drushtaketu, Chekitana, Kashiraja, Purujit, Kuntibhoja, Shybhya, Yudhamanyu, Uttamowja, Abhimanyu and the five sons of Draupadi (Parativindya, Sutasoma, Shrutakeerti, Shataneeka, Shrutakarma).These leaders were termed '*Maharathas*', meaning they were capable of single-handed fighting 10,000 enemy soldiers. They were experts in the use of both types of weapons – *astra* and *shastra*. Here, *astra* refers to weapons such as arrows that are launched after praying and invoking a deity, and *shastra* refers to arrows that are launched without such invocation.

Interestingly, Duryodhana does not name Krishna who was charioteering Arjuna. This is perhaps due to Krishna's vow that He would not take up arms in the war. Duryodhana probably thought Krishna did not count if He was not fighting. A big miscalculation!

अस्माकं तु विशिष्टा ये तान् निबोध द्विजोत्तम ।
नायका मम सैन्यस्य संज्ञार्थं तान् ब्रवीमि ते ।। ७ ।।
asmākaṁ tu viśiṣṭā ye tān nibodha dvijottama
nāyakā mama sainyasya saṁjñārthaṁ tān bravīmi te

भवान् भीष्मश्च कर्णश्च कृपश्च समितिंञ्जयः ।
अश्वत्थामा विकर्णश्च सौमदत्तिस्तथैव च ।। ८ ।।
bhavān bhīṣmaś ca karṇaś ca kṛpaś ca samitiṁjayaḥ
aśvatthāmā vikarṇaś ca saumadattis tathai 'va ca

अन्ये च बहवः शूरा मदर्थे त्यक्तजीविताः ।
नानाशस्त्रप्रहरणाः सर्वे युद्धविशारदाः ॥ ९ ॥
anye ca bahavaḥ śūrā madarthe tyaktajīvitāḥ
nānāśastrapraharaṇāḥ sarve yuddhaviśāradāḥ

O Drona! Superior among wise men! Now I will enumerate the great warriors from our side. So, please listen with attention (1.7)

Our side includes yourself, Bheeshma, Karna, Krupa who has won many wars, Ashwatthama, Vikarna and Bhoorishravas, son of Somadatta. (1.8)

Along with them are many warriors ready to sacrifice their lives for my sake. They are all well versed in wars and are armed with heavy weapons. (1.9)

Comments: Duryodhana now names 7 leaders from his side. He indicates that they are all ready to sacrifice their lives for him. Duryodhana is looking at this war purely to justify holding onto the Pandavas' share of the kingdom and believes that everyone in his side is fighting to please him and not for any higher cause. It is interesting to note that while Duryodhana names 18 leaders from the Pandavas, he only rattles 7 names from his side. Further he does not name his brothers such as Dushasana. This points to some doubts in his mind about his brothers' capabilities.

अपर्याप्तं तदस्माकं बलं भीष्माभिरक्षितम् ।
पर्याप्तं त्विदमेतेषां बलं भीमाभिरक्षितम् ॥ १० ॥
aparyāptaṁ tad asmākaṁ balaṁ bhīṣmābhirakṣitam
paryāptaṃ tvidam eteṣāṁ balaṁ bhīmābhirakṣitam

But our army headed by Bheeshma is not strong enough to defeat them. While their army headed by Bheema can defeat us. (1.10)

Comments: After reviewing the two armies, Duryodhana is beginning to have doubts about the capabilities of his army. He knows that his is not a just cause, but as a representation of *Kali*, the evil soul, it is in his nature to adamantly get into a war even when he knows that he is wrong and that his side is not capable of winning. Note that while Dhrushtadyumna is the commander of the Pandavas' army, Duryodhana recognizes that the real leader of the Pandavas is the hugely experienced Bheema.

अयनेषु च सर्वेषु यथाभागमवस्थिताः ।

भीष्ममेवाभिरक्षन्तु भवन्तः सर्व एव हि ॥ ११ ॥

ayaneṣu ca sarveṣu yathābhāgam avasthitāḥ
bhīṣmam evā 'bhirakṣantu bhavantaḥ sarva eva hi

Hence all of you need to position yourselves in your designated spots in the formations and guard Bheeshma, our commander. (1.11)

Comments: Duryodhana is very particular about protecting Bheeshma as he is worried that Bheeshma's fall would discourage his entire army. The fact that he was worried about the safety of Bheeshma who was the most capable warrior in his side is an indication of his fear.

Bugle Calls

तस्य संजनयन् हर्षं कुरुवृद्धः पितामहः ।

सिंहनादं विनद्योच्चैः शंखं दध्मौ प्रतापवान् ॥ १२ ॥

tasya sañjanayan harṣaṃ kuruvṛddhaḥ pitāmahaḥ
siṃhanādaṃ vinadyocchaiḥ śaṅkhaṃ dadhmau pratāpavān

To inject confidence in Duryodhana, the very courageous Bheeshma who is the senior most Kaurava, roared like a lion and sounded his conch. (1.12)

Comments: Bheeshma recognizes that Duryodhana is so petrified looking at the strength of the Pandava army that he asks Drona and others to protect him. In fact, it is the duty of Bheeshma, as the commander, to protect the Kaurava army. To instill confidence in Duryodhana and the other Kauravas, Bheeshma signals his readiness by his lion like roar and the sounding of his conch.

ततः शंखांश्च भेर्यश्च पणवानकगोमुखाः ।
सहसैवाभ्यहन्यन्त स शब्दस्तुमुलोऽभवत् ।। १३ ।।
tataḥ śaṅkhāś ca bheryaś ca paṇavānakagomukhāḥ
sahasai 'vā 'bhyahanyanta sa śabdas tumulo 'bhavat

Conch-shells, bugles, trumpets, drums, and cow horns were sounded loudly by the Kauravas which resulted in their sound filling the entire space. (1.13)

Comments: Taking a cue from Bheeshma, other Kaurava leaders sounded various organs to signal their readiness and to command their troops to get ready. It is interesting to note that while Bheeshma sounds his conch, a musical instrument with spiritual significance which has a pleasant sound, other leaders sound different instruments, many making harsh sounds not in harmony with each other. Perhaps an indication of disharmony and disunity among the Kauravas.

ततः श्वेतहयैर्युक्ते महति स्यन्दने स्थितौ ।

माधवः पाण्डवश्चैव दिव्यौ शङ्खौ प्रदध्मतुः ॥ १४ ॥

tataḥ śvetair hayair yukte mahati syandane sthitau
mādhavaḥ pāṇḍavaś cai 'va divyau śaṅkhau pradaghmatuḥ

At this time, Lord Madhava (Krishna) and Arjuna, son of Pandu, who were seated on a magnificent chariot pulled by white horses, sounded their respective divine conch shells. (1.14)

Comments: Lord Krishna and Arjuna sounding their conches while seated in a horse drawn chariot also has a spiritual interpretation. As noted by Sri Vidyamanya Teertha in his [GPM], as per the **Upanishads**, the chariot is a representation of the human body. The wandering horses represent the sense organs, and the road travelled represents the objects of sense pleasure. The charioteer (Krishna) represents the intellect, and the leash which controls the horses represents the mind. The charioteer (Krishna) and the passenger (Arjuna) respectively represent the Supreme Soul and the individual soul resident in each body. The conch is shaped like the primordial symbol '*Om*' which is the root letter for all scriptures. Hence the conversation between Krishna and Arjuna represents the collective wisdom of scriptures such as the **Vedas**.

पाञ्चजन्यं हृषीकेशो देवदत्तं धनंञ्जयः ।

पौण्ड्रं दध्मौ महाशंखं भीमकर्मा वृकोदरः ॥ १५ ॥

pāñcajanyaṁ hṛṣīkeśo devadattaṁ dhanañjayaḥ
pauṇḍraṁ dadhmau mahāśaṅkhaṁ bhīmakarmā vṛkodaraḥ

अनन्तविजयं राजा कुन्तीपुत्रो युधिष्ठिरः ।
नकुलः सहदेवश्च सुघोषमणिपुष्पकौ ।। १६ ।।
anantavijayaṁ rājā kuntīputro yudhiṣṭhiraḥ
nakulaḥ sahadevaś ca sughoṣamaṇipuṣpakau

काश्यश्च परमेष्वासः शिखण्डी च महारथः ।
धृष्टद्युम्नो विराटश्च सात्यकिश्चापराजितः ।। १७ ।।
kāśyaś ca parameṣvāsaḥ śikhaṇḍī ca mahārathaḥ
dhṛṣṭadyumno virāṭaś ca sātyakiś cā 'parājitaḥ

द्रुपदो द्रौपदेयाश्च सर्वशः पृथिवीपते ।
सौभद्रश्च महाबाहुः शंखं दध्मुः पृथक् पृथक् ।।१८ ।।
drupado draupadeyāś ca sarvaśaḥ pṛthivīpate
saubhadraś ca mahābāhuḥ śaṅkhān dadhmuḥ pṛthak-pṛthak

Lord Hrishikesha (Krishna) sounded Panchajanya, Dhananjaya (Arjuna) sounded Devadatta, and valiant Vrukodara (Bheema) sounded Powndra. (1.15)

King Yudhishtira, son of Kunti, sounded Anantavijaya, and Nakula and Sahadeva sounded Sughosha and Manipushpaka, respectively. (1.16)

The King of Kashi an expert bowman, Shikhandi a great warrior on chariot, Dhrushtadyumna, Virata and Satyaki, unbeaten in a war, all sounded their respective conch shells. (1.17)

Likewise, King Drupada, the sons of Draupadi and the strong-armed brave son of Subhadra (Abhimanyu,) all sounded their respective conch shells. (1.18)

Comments: It is interesting to note that while the Kauravas used various instruments to sound their readiness, the Pandavas uniformly sounded their respective conches for maximum effect and to display unity.

स घोषो धार्तराष्ट्राणां हृदयानि व्यदारयत् ।
नभश्च पृथिवीं चैव तुमुलो व्यनुनादयन् ।। १९ ।।
sa ghoṣo dhārtarāṣṭrāṇāṁ hṛdayāni vyadārayat
nabhaś ca pṛthivīṁ cai 'va tumulo vyanunādayan

The vibrations from the massive sound of the Pandava warriors' conch shells echoed across the earth and sky, spreading everywhere, and shattered the hearts of King Dhrutarashtra's sons. (1.19)

Comments: The massive, uniform sound from the synchronized sounding of conch shells by the Pandava leaders cut into the Kaurava hearts as if to warn them of their impending defeat and destruction.

अथ व्यवास्थितान् दृष्ट्वा धार्तराष्ट्रान् कपिध्वजः ।
प्रवृत्ते शस्त्रसम्पाते धनुरुद्यम्य पाण्डवः ।। २० ।।
atha vyavasthitān dṛṣṭvā dhārtarāṣṭrān kapidhvajaḥ
pravṛtte śastrasaṁpāte dhanur udyamya pāṇḍavaḥ

हृषीकेशं तदा वाक्यम् इदमाह महीपते ।
hṛṣīkeśaṁ tadā vākyam idam āha mahīpate

Looking at King Dhrutarashtra's children who were ready to wage the war, Arjuna (the one whose chariot bears the flag of Lord Hanuman), just when the time had come to operate the weapons, held up his bow, and spoke to Lord Krishna as follows. (1.20)

Comments: Arjuna wants to take a good look at the armies which consisted of all major, accomplished rulers and warriors of that time. In this verse, a reference is made to the flag of Arjuna's chariot which bears the figure of Lord Hanuman, the great warrior from **the Ramayana**. This indicates that both the Supreme Soul (*paramatma* = Lord Krishna) and the superior soul among all individual souls (*jeevatma* = *vayudeva* = Hanuman) are protecting Arjuna.

Arjuna Inspects the Armies

अर्जुन उवाच –
सेनयोरुभयोर्मध्ये रथं स्थापय मेऽच्युत ।। २१ ।।
arjuna uvāca
senayor ubhayor madhye rathaṁ sthāpaya me 'cyuta

यावदेतान् निरिक्षेऽहं योद्धुकामानवस्थितान् ।
कैर्मया सह योद्धव्यम् अस्मिन् रणसमुद्यमे ।। २२ ।।
yāvad etān nirikṣehaṁ yoddhukāmān avasthitān
kair mayā saha yoddhavyam asmin raṇasamudyame

योत्स्यमानान् अवेक्षेऽहं य एतेऽत्र समागताः ।
धार्तराष्ट्रस्य दुर्बुद्धेर्युद्धे प्रियचिकीर्षवः ।। २३ ।।
yotsyamānān avekṣe 'haṁ ya ete 'tra samāgatāḥ
dhārtarāṣṭrasya durbuddher yuddhe priyacikīrṣavaḥ

Arjuna said:

O Achyuta! Please position my chariot in between the two armies. I would like to look at those who are assembled here, ready to fight the war, and with whom I will be fighting. (1.21) (1.22)

I would also like to look at those warriors who are here to fight the war in order to please the evil minded Duryodhana (son of Dhrutarashtra). (1.23)

Comments: After Duryodhana's review of the armies, it is the turn of Arjuna to survey the forces assembled on the battlefield. Arjuna's review and feelings of apprehension about waging the war form the basis for Sri Krishna's sermon (Gita).

संजय उवाच ।
एवमुक्तो हृषीकेशो गुडाकेशेन भारत ।
सेनयोरुभयोर्मध्ये स्थापयित्वा रथोत्तमम् ।। २४ ।।
sañjaya uvāca
evam ukto hṛṣīkeśo guḍākeśena bhārata
senayor ubhayor madhye sthāpayitvā rathottama

भीष्मद्रोणप्रमुखतः सर्वेषां च महीक्षिताम् ।
उवाच पार्थ पश्यैतान् समवेतान् कुरूनिति ।। २५ ।।
bhīṣmadroṇapramukhataḥ sarveṣāṁ ca mahīkṣitām
uvāca pārtha paśyai 'tān samavetān kurūn iti

Sanjaya said:

O Bhaarata! (Dhrutarashtra, from the lineage of King Bharata)! Lord Hrishikesha (Krishna), addressed thus by Gudakesha (Arjuna) positioned the grand chariot in between the two armies. (1.24)

Turning the chariot towards Bheeshma, Drona and other kings, Lord Krishna said - O Partha (Arjuna)! Look at all the Kauravas assembled here. (1.25)

Comments: Arjuna is referred to as Gudakesha – the one who has conquered sleep (*gudaka*). Sleep, along with lethargy represents *tamas* (ignorance). Sleep is probably the most difficult state for one to overcome. Thus, anyone who can control sleep is said to have control over sense organs. Hence, Arjuna is most eligible to receive the sermon from the Lord. The Lord is referred as Hrishikesha, one who has control over everyone's sense organs and indeed on everyone and everything in the universe.

तत्रापश्यत् स्थितान् पार्थः पितृनथ पितामहान् ।
आचार्यान् मातुलान् भ्रातृन् पुत्रान् पौत्रान् सखींस्तथा ।
श्वशुरान् सुहृदश्चैव सेनयोरुभयोरपि ।। २६ ।।
tatrā 'paśyat sthitān pārthaḥ pitṛn atha pitāmahān
ācāryān mātulān bhrātṛn putrān pautrān sakhīṁs tathā
śvaśurān suhṛdaś cai 'va senayor ubhayor api

तान् समीक्ष्य स कौन्तेयः सर्वान् बन्धूनवस्थितान् ।
कृपया परयाऽऽविष्टो विषीदन्निदमब्रवीत् ।।२७।।
tān samīkṣya sa kaunteyaḥ sarvān bandhūn avasthitān
kṛpayā parayā 'viṣṭo viṣīdann idamabravīt

Looking at both the armies, Arjuna sees warriors who were like his father (father figures), father-in-law, grandfathers, uncles, teachers, brothers, sons, grandsons, friends, and colleagues. (1.26)

Seeing all his relatives assembled there to wage the war, Arjuna (son of Kunti) was overwhelmed by emotion and addressed Sri Krishna with great anxiety. (1.27)

Comments: While Arjuna knew that many of his near and dear ones would be participating in the war, he is

overwhelmed when he sees all of them assembled in one place. Faced with the prospect of many of them dying, regardless of who won the war, Arjuna is overcome with grief and emotion.

Sri Rayaru in [GV] provides an explanation for the term *vishada* which is used to express Arjuna's emotion. *Vishada* means mental weakness caused by grief which is a result of delusion, which in turn is caused by the fear of losing loved ones.

Arjuna Develops Cold Feet

अर्जुन उवाच ।
दृष्ट्वेमं स्वजनं कृष्ण युयुत्सुं समुपस्थितम् ॥ २८ ॥
arjuna uvāca
dṛṣṭve'maṁ svajanaṁ kṛṣṇa yuyutsuṁ samupasthitam

सीदन्ति मम गात्राणि मुखं च परिशुष्यति ।
वेवथुश्च शरीरे मे रोमहर्षश्च जायते ॥ २९ ॥
sīdanti mama gātrāṇi mukhaṁ ca pariśuṣyati
vepathuś ca śarīre me romaharṣaś ca jāyate

Arjuna said:

O Krishna! I am looking at my relatives and friends gathered here to wage the war. (1.28)

Looking at them, my limbs are weakening, my face is crumpling, my body is trembling, and my hair is bristling. (1.29)

Comments: From this verse, till the end of this chapter is a description of Arjuna's anxiety and fear when faced with the prospect of waging the war which would result

in the loss of lives of multitudes of people including many of his near and dear ones. Note that Arjuna begins describing his anxiety to the Lord by addressing Him as Krishna. This has a special significance. Sri Madhwacharya in his **Gita Bhashya** [GB] (5th Chapter), interprets Krishna as '*lokakarshaka'*, one who controls everyone and everything in the universe. By using this term, Arjuna expresses his faith that Lord Krishna will have a solution to his grief.

गाण्डीवं स्रंसते हस्तात् त्वक् चैव परिदह्यते ।
न च शक्नोम्यवस्थातुं भ्रमतीव च मे मनः ॥ ३० ॥
gāṇḍīvaṁ sraṁsate hastāt tvak cai 'va paridahyate
na ca śaknomy avasthātuṁ bhramatī 'va ca me manaḥ

निमित्तानि च पश्यामि विपरीतानि केशव ।
न च श्रेयोऽनुपश्यामि हत्वा स्वजनमाहवे ॥ ३१ ॥
nimittāni ca paśyāmi viparītāni keśava
na ca śreyo 'nupaśyāmi hatvā svajanam āhave

न काङ्क्षे विजयं कृष्ण न च राज्यं सुखानि च ।
किं नो राज्येन गोविन्द किं भोगैर्जीवितेन वा ॥३२॥
na kāṅkṣe vijayaṁ kṛṣṇa na ca rājyaṁ sukhāni ca
kiṃ no rājyena govinda kiṁ bhogair jīvitena vā

My bow (Gandeeva) is slipping from my hands, my skin is burning, I am unable to even stand and my mind is blurred with delusion. (1.30)

O Keshava! I am seeing many bad omens. I do not see anything good coming out of killing my own people. (1.31)

O Krishna! I do not aspire for victory, kingdom, or happiness. O Govinda! What use is this kingdom, luxuries, or even living? (1.32)

Comments: Sri Madhwacharya in his Gita Bhashya [GB], interprets the Lord's name Keshava, as the one who inspires even deities Brahma (*ka*) and Rudra (*esha*). Arjuna, by using this term to address the Lord expresses his complete faith that Lord Krishna who inspires even deities Brahma and Rudra, can surely help him. Arjuna's sensing of bad omens reflects his weak mind (If these omens were indeed predicting bad outcomes, he would have lost the war, which did not happen).

येषामर्थे काङ्क्षितं नो राज्यं भोगाः सुखानि च ।
त इमेऽवस्थिता युद्धे प्राणांस्त्यक्त्वा धनानि च ।। ३३ ।।
yeṣām arthe kāṅkṣitaṁ no rājyaṁ bhogāḥ sukhāni ca
ta ime 'vasthitā yuddhe prāṇāṁs tyaktvā dhanāni ca

आचार्याः पितरः पुत्रास्तथैव च पितामहाः ।
मातुलाः श्वशुराः पौत्राः श्यालाः संम्बन्धिनस्तथा ।। ३४ ।।
ācāryāḥ pitaraḥ putrās tathai 'va ca pitāmahāḥ
mātulāḥ śvaśurāḥ pautrāḥ śyālāḥ sambandhinas tathā

एतान्न हन्तुमिच्छामि घ्नतोऽपि मधुसूदन ।
अपि त्रैलोक्यराज्यस्य हेतोः किं नु महीकृते ।। ३५।।
etān na hantum icchhāmi ghnato 'pi madhusūdana
api trailokyarājyasya hetoḥ kiṁ nu mahīkṛte

The very people for whom we work hard to provide comfort and luxury are here ready to give up their possessions and even their lives. They are like my father,

grandfather, uncle, son, grandson, brother, brother-in-law, teacher, and other relatives. (1.33) (1.34)

O Madhusoodana! Even if they hurt me, I do not want to kill them. I would not kill them even if I could win all three worlds by doing so. Why would I kill them just for some land? (1.35)

Comments: Arjuna is overcome with emotion and states that even if his enemies attacked him when he turned away from war, he would not want to harm them. Even if victory would net him all three worlds, he would not value them if he had to kill his loved ones. Why then would he wage a war just for some land?

Note that Arjuna addresses Krishna as Madhusoodana. Demons Madhu and Kaitabha were born out of Krishna's sweat and in that sense are Krishna's children. As they grew up, they became very evil and Krishna had no choice but to destroy them. Arjuna indicates here that he does not have such strong will power.

निहत्य धार्तराष्ट्रान् नः का प्रीतिः स्याज्जनार्दन ।
पापमेवाऽश्रयेदस्मान् हत्वैतान् आततायिनः ।। ३६ ।।
nihatya dhārtarāṣṭrān naḥ kā prītiḥ syāj janārdana
pāpam evā 'śrayed asmān hatvai 'tān ātatāyinaḥ

तस्मान्नार्हा वयं हन्तुं धार्तराष्ट्रान् सबान्धवान् ।
स्वजनं हि कथं हत्वा सुखिनः स्याम माधव ।। ३७।।
tasmān nā 'rhā vayaṃ hantuṁ dhārtarāṣṭrān svabāndhavān
svajanaṁ hi kathaṁ hatvā sukhinaḥ syāma mādhava

O Janardana! What pleasure do we get by killing the sons of Dhrutarashtra? Killing these vandals (*atatayins*) will only result in accumulation of sins. (1.36)

O Madhava! It is not proper for us to kill Dhrutarashtra's sons who are our own relatives. How can we achieve happiness by killing our own people? (1.37)

Comments: Arjuna refers to the Kauravas as *atatayina* which means those who have committed one or more of the following six sins – torching others, poisoning others, using weapons against the unprotected, stealing others' land, money and women. It is the duty of someone in Arjuna's position to destroy those who commit these sins. It is his duty to preserve and protect the innocent in society. While Arjuna is aware that the Kauravas deserve to be punished, he is worried that doing so would result in collateral damage – that is the death of his relatives, elders and teachers which would result in him accumulating sins.

Arjuna Argues Against War

यद्यप्येते न पश्यन्ति लोभोपहतचेतसः ।
कुलक्षयकृतं दोषं मित्रद्रोहे च पातकम् ॥ ३८ ॥
yady apy ete na paśyanti lobhopahatacetasaḥ
kulakṣayakṛtaṁ doṣaṁ mitradrohe ca pātakam

कथं न ज्ञेयमस्माभिः पापादस्मान्निवर्तितुम् ।
कुलक्षयकृतं दोषं प्रपश्यद्भिर्जनार्दन ॥ ३९ ॥
kathaṁ na jñeyam asmābhiḥ pāpād asmān nivartitum
kulakṣayakṛtaṁ doṣaṁ prapaśyadbhir janārdana

कुलक्षये प्रणश्यन्ति कुलधर्माः सनातनाः ।
धर्मे नष्टे कुलं कृत्स्नम् अधर्मोऽभिभवत्युत ॥ ४० ॥

kulakṣaye praṇaśyanti kuladharmāḥ sanātanāḥ
dharme naṣṭe kulaṃ kṛtsnam adharmo 'bhibhavaty uta

अधर्माभिभवात् कृष्ण प्रदुष्यन्ति कुलस्त्रियः ।
स्त्रीषु दुष्टासु वार्ष्णेय जायते वर्णसङ्करः ॥ ४१ ॥
adharmābhibhavāt kṛṣṇa praduṣyanti kulastriyaḥ
strīṣu duṣṭāsu vārṣṇeya jāyate varṇasaṁkaraḥ

संङ्करो नरकायैव कुलघ्नानां कुलस्य च ।
पतन्ति पितरो ह्येषां लुप्तपिण्डोदकक्रियाः ॥ ४२ ॥
saṅkaro narakāyai 'va kulaghnānāṃ kulasya ca
patanti pitaro hy eṣāṁ luptapiṇḍodakakriyāḥ

These Kauravas who are greedy for the kingdom have no knowledge of the sins they would accumulate by killing their family members and by betraying their friends. (1.38)

O Janardana! How can we, who understand the perils of destroying families, not be aware of the need to stay away from these sinful acts? (1.39)

With the destruction of the families, traditional familial virtues will perish. When virtuousness declines, unrighteousness will permeate society. (1.40)

O Vaarshneya! The rise of unrighteousness will cause surviving women to stray away from morality. Women devoid of morals result in unholy families. (1.41)

Rise of unholy families will push the lineage of children and grandchildren to hell, and departed elders who are deprived of appropriate offerings will also fall into hell. (1.42)

Comments: Arjuna tries to make a case for avoiding the battle by putting forward additional arguments. His initial argument was that the war would result in the loss of many innocent lives, including great elders and teachers who were pious and revered. Here he argues that the loss of many men in the war would lead to instability in society and give rise to unholy families. This would result in the loss of compulsory rituals such as offerings to departed elders. Arjuna also says that the Kauravas are blinded by their greed and are unable to see the perils of such a war. But how could the Pandavas who are a lot more knowledgeable about such perils be similarly blinded?

दोषैरेतैः कुलघ्नानां वर्णसंकरकारकैः ।
उत्साद्यन्ते जातिधर्माः कुलधर्माश्च शाश्वताः ।। ४३।।
doṣair etaiḥ kulaghnānāṁ varṇasaṁkarakārakaiḥ
utsādyante jātidharmāḥ kuladharmāś ca śāśvatāḥ

उत्सन्नकुलधर्माणां मनुष्याणां जनार्दन ।
नरके नियतं वासो भवतीत्यनुशुश्रुम ।। ४४ ।।
utsannakuladharmāṇāṁ manuṣyāṇāṁ janārdana
narake niyataṁ vāso bhavatī 'ty anuśuśruma

अहो बत महत् पापं कर्तुं व्यवसिता वयम् ।
यद्राज्यसुखलोभेन हन्तुं स्वजनमुद्यताः ।। ४५ ।।
aho bata mahat pāpaṁ kartuṁ vyavasitā vayam
yad rājyasukhalobhena hantuṁ svajanam udyatāḥ

यदि मामप्रतीकारम् अशस्त्रं शस्त्रपाणयः ।
धार्तराष्ट्रा रणे हन्युस्तन्मे क्षेमतरं भवेत् ।। ४६ ।।

yadi mām apratīkāram aśastraṁ śastrapāṇayaḥ
dhārtarāṣṭrā raṇe hanyus tan me kṣemataraṁ bhavet

Such sinful deeds by destroyers of families will result in corruption of virtuous classes and decline of virtuous familial traditions. (1.43)

O Janardana! We have heard from elders that people whose virtuous familial traditions are destroyed are sure to fall into hell. (1.44)

Alas! We are about to commit a great sin by killing our own people because of our greed for kingdom and for the sake of happiness. (1.45)

It would be better for me if I relinquish my weapons and offer no resistance while Dhrutarashtra's sons kill me in this war. (1.46)

Comments: Arjuna now summarizes his arguments for staying away from the war. Firstly, he would be committing a great sin by killing near and dear ones which included elders and teachers who were pious and revered. Secondly, the loss of millions of men would lead to instability in society due to straying away from traditions related to a class (*jati dharma*) and traditions specific to families (*kula dharma*). In addition, anyone causing these would accrue sins to their departed elders. Arjuna laments that he is about to commit great sins in waging this war, the purpose of which is to gain the kingdom. He is convinced that it is better for him to relinquish his weapons and let the Kauravas kill him as that would prevent him from accruing sins and in fact may lead him to heavens hereafter for his noble act.

As will be seen later, Arjuna fights the war and the Pandavas successfully rule their kingdom for many years. None of Arjuna's fears come true. The evil clan of the Kauravas and their supporters such as the virtuous but guilty Bheeshma and Drona are vanquished, and society does not fall apart. In fact, Bharat enjoys a long, peaceful and prosperous period under Pandavas' rule. The **Gita** clearly suggests that omens do not have any predictive value and chastises superstitious practices. Arjuna's experience of bad omens reflected his weak mental condition which was caused by his excessive attachment to his dear ones.

Arjuna Drops His Weapons

संजय उवाच –
एवमुक्त्वाऽर्जुनःसंख्ये रथोपस्थ उपाविशत् ।
विसृज्य सशरं चापं शोकसंविग्नमानसः ॥ ४७ ॥

Saṅjaya uvāca
evam uktvā 'rjunaḥ saṅkhye rathopastha upāviśat
visṛjya saśaraṁ cāpaṁ śokasaṁvignamānasaḥ

Sanjaya said:

Having said thus, Arjuna, stricken with deep sorrow in his mind, drops his bow and arrows and sits still in the middle of his chariot. (1.47)

Comments: While Arjuna indicates to Krishna his anxiety and unwillingness to wage war, his relinquishing of his bow and arrows is a signal to his large army that he is not yet ready to start the war. (The army of course could not have heard the conversation between Arjuna

and Krishna). This action would lead to their enemies drawing their own conclusions which Krishna indicates later on.

Summary of Chapter 1

The Bhagavad Gita is a conversation between Arjuna and Lord Krishna as narrated by Lord Vedavyasa in the epic, **Mahabharata**. The great war between the armies of the Kaurava and the Pandava cousins, was witnessed by Sanjaya, aide of the blind King Dhrutarashtra who was head of the Kaurava dynasty. Sanjaya rushes to Dhrutarashtra soon after the fall of Bheeshma, the commander of the Kaurava army. The stunned Dhrutarashtra wants to know everything that happened on the battlefield from the very beginning. Sanjaya narrates all the events from the beginning of the war. He stays with the king till the end of the war relaying all the events to him. He is able to do this because Sage Vedavyasa grants him divine vision to view the war remotely and provide him the updates.

The King begins by asking Sanjaya what happened between his clan (the Kauravas) and the Pandavas in Kurukshetra (which is known as Dharma Kshetra or the 'Field of Righteousness') (1.1). This question reveals the King's apprehensions. He is convinced that the Pandavas with the guidance of Lord Krishna would be invincible (but, Krishna has sworn not to touch or take up arms). On the other hand, Bheeshma, the very epitome of justice, was also known to be invincible. The King was therefore hoping against hope that his sons would not be defeated, especially in a war that was being fought in an area known as the Field of Righteousness. So he is shocked to hear

that Bheeshma has fallen. Sanjaya responds, saying that initially Duryodhana looks at the Pandava army and rushes to inform his teacher Dronacharya about its strength. He makes sure to let him know that the army is being led by Dhrishtadyumna, a student of Drona himself. Then he goes on to enumerate other great leaders on the side of the Pandavas. These leaders were termed '*Maharathas*', meaning they were capable of single-handedly fighting with 10,000 enemy soldiers. In all, Duryodhana enumerates 18 leaders from the Pandavas' side, other than the five Pandava brothers. Interestingly, he does not recognize Krishna as being a part of the Pandava side. This is because Krishna had vowed not to use any arms in the war. Duryodhana obviously did not realize the invaluable advice and guidance that Krishna would be providing to Arjuna. Ultimately, this miscalculation would lead to the Kauravas' defeat. This illustrates the peril of ignoring the Lord who is responsible for everything in this universe, just because one cannot physically see Him. (1.2-1.6).

Duryodhana then enumerates the great warriors on his side which included – Dronacharya, Bheeshma, Karna, Krupa, Ashwatthama, Vikarna and Bhoorishravas. However, he had not expected the Pandavas to turn up with a huge, well organized army. He knows that in addition to the experienced warriors, the Pandava army also included the 5 young children of Draupadi and each of them was brave and capable. He also knows that while Dhrushtadyumna is the commander of the Pandava army, it is really the invincible Bheema who is their star warrior. Duryodhana is now clearly very perturbed. He wants to ensure that Bheeshma is well protected as he sees Bheeshma as extremely critical to his victory. He asks Dronacharya and others to ensure Bheeshma's safety (1.7-1.11). At this time, sensing Duryodhana's worry,

Bheeshma decided to instil confidence in him by loudly roaring like a lion and sounding his conch. Other soldiers in the Kaurava army follow by sounding drums, trumpets, bugles etc, and the collective sound seemed to envelope the entire space. Now it is the turn of the Pandavas. Sri Krishna and Arjuna, while seated in their chariots sound their respective conches followed by other leaders in their army. The collective sound of these conches reverberated across earth and sky and seemed to shatter the hearts of King Dhrutarashtra's sons. It is interesting to note that while the Kauravas used various instruments to sound their readiness, the Pandavas uniformly sounded their respective conches for maximum effect. Lord Krishna and Arjuna sounding their conches while seated in a horse drawn chariot also has a spiritual interpretation. The chariot is a representation of the human body as noted in the **Upanishads**. The horses which pull the chariot represent the sense organs, and the roads travelled represent objects of sense pleasure. The charioteer (Krishna) represents the intellect, and the leash which controls the horses represents the mind. The charioteer (Krishna) and the passenger (Arjuna) represent the Supreme soul and the individual soul resident in each body. The conch is shaped like the primordial symbol '*Om*' which is the root letter for all scriptures. Hence the conversation between Krishna and Arjuna represents the collective wisdom of all the scriptures such as the **Vedas** (1.12-1.19).

Arjuna requests Krishna to take the chariot to the middle of the battleground so that he can have a good look at both the armies. He recognizes his teachers, cousins, nephews, uncles, grand uncles, children, friends etc., and gets very depressed. He is distressed at the very thought of waging a war where he himself might kill

many of his near and dear ones. Arjuna tells Krishna that his body is trembling, and that he is unable to hold his weapons. He was feeling disoriented and disillusioned. He was further seeing bad omens and felt there was nothing good coming out of this war. He says he does not crave for victory or a kingdom won after losing so many near and dear ones (1.20-1.39). He reasons that with massive destruction of men, familial values would perish, and unrighteousness would take over society. Arjuna says that such a war has no benefits either here or hereafter. He says he would rather drop his weapons and let the Kauravas kill him rather than be responsible for such a destructive war. Saying thus, Arjuna drops his weapon to the ground and sits in his chariot feeling extremely dejected (1.40 - 1.47).

The rest of the **Gita** is a sermon from Lord Krishna to Arjuna to help him overcome his distress and doubts. The dropping of weapons by Arjuna is equivalent to one abdicating one's responsibility. At this stage, the following points are worth noting: Duryodhana was also distressed after looking at the Pandavas' army but there is a big difference between the distress of Duryodhana and that of Arjuna. Duryodhana was distressed at the thought of not being able to win the war and thereby usurp the Pandavas share of the kingdom illegally. On the other hand, Arjuna's distress was out of compassion towards his loved ones. Duryodhana shows no such compassion. Arjuna was not afraid of fighting as he had fought many wars before and had won them. But this time it was different. His enemies were people he cared for dearly.

।। इति प्रथमोऽध्यायः ।।

End of Chapter 1

द्वितीयोऽध्यायः – सांख्ययोगः
Chapter 2 – The Path of Doctrines

Chapter Introduction: This chapter of 72 verses is termed *Sankhya Yoga* (The Path of Doctrines). In this chapter, the Lord answers Arjuna's basic questions about the purpose of life and related philosophical concepts. Sensing that Arjuna's reservations about fighting the war were due to his fear of losing his loved ones, the Lord delves into the nature of individual souls, the indestructibility of souls, the relationship between individual souls and Himself. He reminds Arjuna that He gave human forms to individual souls to help them in their spiritual journey and that everyone must play their dutiful role in society. In verses (2.12) to (2.39), the Lord lectures on the nature of individual souls and the Supreme soul (Lord Almighty). In verse (2.39), the Lord tells Arjuna how to acquire divine, spiritual knowledge which is explained in brief in verses (2.45) to (2.51). In these verses, the Lord discusses the concept of *nishkama karma*, that is, performing prescribed duties without expectations. The Lord urges Arjuna not to despair over the hurt that may be caused to his elders and teachers in the war, as they had chosen to support the evil king Duryodhana, and reminds Arjuna that he had an obligation to fight this just war to protect his citizens. Lord Krishna teaches Arjuna to focus on performing his prescribed duty of protecting his citizens as an offering to the Lord Almighty and not let his emotions come in the way. Chapter 2 can be considered the foundational chapter of the entire **Gita** as it answers Arjuna's (and through Arjuna, everyone's) basic questions about the purpose of life. The remaining chapters serve to expand on the concepts presented in this chapter.

संजय उवाच –

तं तथा कृपयाऽऽविष्टम् अश्रुपूर्णाकुलेक्षणम् ।

विषीदन्तमिदं वाक्यम् उवाच मधुसूदनः ॥ १ ॥

sañjaya uvāca: taṁ tathā kṛpayā 'viṣṭam aśrupūrṇāku-lekṣaṇam
viṣīdantam idaṁ vākyam uvāca madhusūdanaḥ

Sanjaya said:

Lord Madhusoodana said the following to grief stricken Arjuna who was overcome with self-pity and had tears in his eyes. (2.1)

Comments: Sensing Dhrutarashtra's curiosity as to the events that follow Arjuna's dropping of his weapons, Sanjaya continues with his narration of the next set of events starting with Lord Krishna's questioning of Arjuna's actions.

Arjuna, Rise Up and Wage this Just War

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

कुतस्त्वा कश्मलमिदं विषमे समुपस्थितम् ।

अनार्यजुष्टमस्वर्ग्यम् अकीर्तिकरमर्जुन ॥ २ ॥

śrībhagavān uvāca: kutas tvā kaśmalam idaṁ viṣame samupasthitam
anāryajuṣṭam asvargyam akīrtikaram arjuna

The Lord said:

O Arjuna! What caused this delusion for you to give up your duties at a time of crisis? This is not expected of wise men, it does not lead to glory, or heavens and it only brings infamy. (2.2)

Comments: By stating that Arjuna is uttering words unworthy of wise men, Lord Krishna is giving a hint of the concept of '*prajnavada*' which will be elaborated in verse (2.11).

क्लैब्यं मा स्म गमः पार्थ नैतत्त्वय्युपपद्यते ।

क्षुद्रं हृदयदौर्बल्यं त्यक्त्वोत्तिष्ट परन्तप ॥ ३ ॥

klaibyaṁ mā sma gamaḥ pārtha nai 'tat tvayy upapadyate
kṣudraṁ hṛdayadaurbalyaṁ tyaktvo 'ttiṣṭha Parantapa

O Partha! Do not yield to weakness. This is not worthy of you. O Parantapa (Destroyer of enemies)! Get rid of your heart's weakness, get up and get ready to wage this war. (2.3)

Comments: Krishna asking Arjuna to get up has both literal and figurative meanings. In verse (1.47), it was noted that Arjuna was sitting still in his chariot, refusing to wage the war. Now Krishna is directing Arjuna to get out of his chariot and wage the just war. It also indicates the need to get into action in pursuance of one's duty. Krishna also refers to Arjuna as *Parantapa* (destroyer of enemies), to remind him that he has waged and won many wars earlier and need not be afraid to fight this war.

Arjuna's Dilemma and Surrender to Krishna

अर्जुन उवाच ।

कथं भीष्ममहं संख्ये द्रोणं च मधुसूदन ।

इषुभिः प्रतियोत्स्यामि पूजार्हावरिसूदन ॥ ४ ॥

arjuna uvāca: kathaṁ bhīṣmam ahaṁ sāṁkhye droṇaṁ ca madhusūdana
iṣubhiḥ pratiyotsyāmi pūjārhāv arisūdana

Arjuna said:

O Madhusoodana (Annihilator of demon Madhu)! How can I direct my arrows at Bheeshma and Drona who are worthy of worship? (2.4)

Comments: Arjuna who is overcome with grief and emotion is not able to relate to Krishna's advice and reiterates his position in 5 verses. Arjuna indicates that even if he were to approach the war as a duty, he could not hurl his arrows at Bheeshma and Drona who have taught him much and are worthy of worship.

गुरूनहत्वा हि महानुभावान्
श्रेयो भोक्तुं भैक्ष्यमपीह लोके ।
हत्वाऽर्थकामांस्तु गुरूनिहैव
भुञ्जीय भोगान् रुधिरप्रदिग्धान् ।। ५ ।।

gurūn ahatvā hi mahānubhāvān śreyo bhoktuṁ bhaikṣyam apī 'ha loke
hatvā 'rthakāmaṁs tu gurun ihai 'va bhuñjīya bhogān rud-hirapradigdhān

It is better to live by begging for alms than kill our great teachers. How can one enjoy the luxuries of a kingdom attained by spilling the blood of these teachers who are waging a war for riches? (2.5)

Comments: Arjuna argues that it is not worth winning the war which would entail killing his elders and teachers who are pious and God fearing, as that would not lead to any joy in this world and would bring difficulties hereafter also. A better option would be to give up fighting and live by begging for alms.

न चैतद्विद्मः कतरन्नो गरीयो
यद्वा जयेम यदि वा नो जयेयुः ।
यानेव हत्वा न जिजीविषाम–
स्तेऽवस्थिताः प्रमुखे धार्तराष्ट्राः ।। ६ ।।

na cai 'tad vidmaḥ kataran no garīyo yad vā jayema yadi vā no jayeyuḥ
yān eva hatvā na jijīviṣāmas te 'vasthitāḥ pramukhe dhār-tarāṣṭrāḥ

I do not know which is better, that we win, or they win over us. We do not desire to live by killing the sons of Dhrutarashtra who are standing in front of us. (2.6)

Comments: Arjuna argues that if he wins the war by killing the Kauravas, it is in a way equivalent to losing, as the war would also entail the death of many near and dear ones. Arjuna, thus is not able to decide the better option. Prior to this verse, Arjuna seemed to have made up his mind that he would not wage the war, but now after reflecting on Krishna's advice he is weighing both options.

कार्पण्यदोषोपहतस्वभावः
पृच्छामि त्वां धर्मसम्मूढचेताः ।
यच्छ्रेयः स्यान्निश्चितं ब्रूहि तन्मे
शिष्यस्तेऽहं शाधि मां त्वां प्रपन्नम् ।। ७ ।।

kārpaṇyadoṣopahatasvabhāvaḥ pṛcchāmi tvāṁ dharma-saṁmūḍhacetāḥ
yac chreyaḥ syān niścitaṁ brūhi tan me śiṣyaste 'haṁ śādhi māṁ tvāṁ prapannam

My natural valor is subdued due to compassion. My mind is conflicted on the issue of duty. I am asking you. Which is the path for ultimate good? I am your disciple. I surrender to you. Please guide me. (2.7)

Comments: Arjuna is clearly conflicted and is not able to make up his mind. He surrenders to Krishna and asks for Krishna's guidance.

न हि प्रपश्यामि ममापनुद्याद्
यच्छोकमुच्छोषणमिन्द्रियाणाम् ।
अवाप्य भूमावसपत्नमृद्धं
राज्यं सुराणामपि चाधिपत्यम् ॥ ८ ॥

na hi prapaśyāmi mamā 'panudyād yac chokam uc-choṣaṇam indriyāṇām
avāpya bhūmāv asapatnam ṛddhaṁ rājyaṁ surāṇām api cā 'dhipatyam

Even if I achieve unchallenged ownership of this prosperous world here, and supremacy over the deities in the upper worlds hereafter, I cannot see how I can dispel this grief which is draining my senses. (2.8)

Comments: Here again we see that Arjuna is conflicted. He declares that even if he were to follow his prescribed duties and wage the war to protect the citizens from the evil Kauravas, and even if his actions result in him accruing enough good credits to become the leader of heavens, he would be unable to control his grief over the prospect of losing near and dear ones.

संजय उवाच ।

एवमुक्त्वा हृषीकेशं गुडाकेशः परन्तपः ।

न योत्स्य इति गोविन्दम् उक्त्वा तूष्णीं बभूव ह ॥ ९ ॥

sañjaya uvāca: evam uktvā hṛṣīkeśaṁ guḍākeśaḥ paraṁtapaḥ
na yotsya iti govindam uktvā tūṣṇīṁ babhūva ha

Sanjaya said:

Gudakesha (Arjuna, the one who has conquered sleep), Parantapa (Arjuna - the destroyer of enemies), thus addressed Govinda, (Krishna - the controller of senses). Saying that he would not fight the war (as he is conflicted), he became silent. (2.9)

Comments: Arjuna is referred to as Gudakesha – one who has conquered sleep. Sleep, along with lethargy represents *tamas* or ignorance. Arjuna has won over these and hence is eligible to receive the sermon from the Lord. Further, Arjuna is termed *Parantapa*, the one who has destroyed enemies in many wars. Sri Rayaru in [GV] draws attention to the use of the term '*ha*' which indicates surprise. Sanjaya seems to be indicating that it was a surprise to him that Arjuna with such qualities, was in a despondent mood.

तमुवाच हृषीकेशः प्रहसन्निव भारत ।

सेनयोरुभयोर्मध्ये विषीदन्तमिदं वचः ॥ १० ॥

tam uvāca hṛṣīkeśaḥ prahasann iva bhārata
senayor ubhayor madhye viṣīdantam idaṁ vacaḥ

O Dhrutarashtra of the Bharata dynasty! Lord Hrishikesha smilingly said the following words to grief stricken Arjuna who was in the middle of the armies. (2.10)

Comments: Krishna's smile is a rhetorical reaction to the inconsistent position that Arjuna had placed himself in.

The Soul is Eternal, The Body is Perishable

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

अशोच्यानन्वशोचस्त्वं प्रज्ञावादांश्च भाषसे ।

गतासूनगतासूंश्च नानुशोचन्ति पण्डिताः ।। ११ ।।

śrībhagavān uvāca: aśocyān anvaśocas tvaṁ prajñāvādāṁś ca bhāṣase
gatāsūn agatāsūṁś ca nā 'nuśocanti paṇḍitāḥ

The Lord said:

You are grieving over those who do not deserve sympathy and saying whatever is coming to your mind. Learned ones do not grieve over those who are about to die just as they do not grieve over those living. (2.11)

Comments: Elders and teachers such as Bheeshma and Drona, even though worthy of worship, were on the side of evil and so Arjuna should not have been grieving over their impending death. Krishna uses the word '*Prajnaavada*' which has two meanings – one who says whatever is coming to one's mind and secondly, one whose words are not acceptable to the wise.

न त्वेवाहं जातु नासं न त्वं नेमे जनाधिपाः ।
न चैव न भविष्यामः सर्वे वयमतः परम् ।। १२ ।।
na tv evā 'haṁ jātu nā 'saṁ na tvaṁ neme janādhipāḥ
na cai 'va na bhaviṣyāmaḥ sarve vayam ataḥ param

There was no time when neither Me nor you nor any of these kings here did not exist. Even in future there will be no time when any of us will cease to exist. (2.12)

Comments: Krishna goes on to answer three conflicts in Arjuna's mind which are causing him distress. Is the distress due to a fear of the loss of souls of loved ones? Or is it due to a fear of the loss of their physical bodies? Or is it due to a fear of the loss of their bodies which are equated to their souls?

He answers the first question in this verse where he categorically states that souls are eternal and have no beginning or end. This applies to Arjuna, to all kings assembled at the warfront (and by extension everyone) and especially to the Lord Almighty, which is indicated using the word '*tu'*.

The fact that the Lord is especially eternal is supported by scriptures such as **Katha Upanishad (2.5.13)** which describes the Lord as '*nityo nityanam*' (He is eternal among eternals). While the individual souls are eternal, the Lord's eternality is superior to that of individual souls. Living beings whose souls are eternal do undergo creation and destruction of their physical bodies (birth and death), but the Lord who has a transcendental body does not experience creation or destruction. Hence, He is said to have superior eternality compared to individual souls.

The other two questions are answered in later verses (2.13) and (2.20).

A question that arises at this stage is - how could Arjuna, himself a realized soul as an incarnation of deity Devendra, the king of all deities, harbour such doubts about the nature of the Lord? Sri Madhwacharya answers this question in [GTN] by stating that the Lord in the form of Vedavyasa in the great epic **Mahabharata** elaborates the sermon in more detail for the benefit of humanity.

देहिनोऽस्मिन् यथा देहे कौमारं यौवनं जरा ।
तथा देहान्तरप्राप्तिर्धीरस्तत्र न मुह्यति ।। १३ ।।
dehino 'smin yathā dehe kaumāraṁ yauvanaṁ jarā
tathā dehāntaraprāptir dhīras tatra na muhyat

Just as one experiences childhood, youth, and old age, one similarly experiences attainment of another body. So, the wise ones do not grieve over the loss of the physical body. (2.13)

Comments: While the verse (2.12) dealt with the issue of a soul's nature, in this verse the Lord describes the nature of one's physical body. Just as one goes through changes in the physical body over one's lifetime, death is inevitable in the end. Hence Arjuna has no reason to grieve over the loss of the physical bodies of his loved ones in a just war.

Attachment Causes Misery

मात्रास्पर्शास्तु कौन्तेय शीतोष्णसुखदुःखदाः ।
आगमापायिनोऽनित्यास्तांस्तितिक्षस्व भारत ।। १४ ।।

mātrāsparśās tu kaunteya śītoṣṇasukhaduḥkhadāḥ
āgamāpāyino 'nityās tāṁs titikṣasva bhārata

Do sense organs and sensory objects cause one to experience cold or heat, happiness, or sadness? No. One experiences temporary happiness or sadness when these are accompanied by attachment. O Bharata! Rid yourself of attachment which is the real reason for happiness or sadness. (2.14)

Comments: If Arjuna's distress is due to him not being able to interact with his near and dear ones after they die in war, the Lord states that such distress is due to attachment. Interaction of sense organs with sensory objects do not in themselves cause happiness or sadness. Only when such interaction is accompanied by attachment to the physical body does one experience happiness or sadness. Krishna uses the example of heat and cold as sensory objects that cause pleasure or misery when they come in contact with one's skin (the only sense organ that covers one's entire body). A cool breeze in summer may cause pleasure but the same breeze in winter would cause discomfort. The difference is because of one's attachment to the body. Again, when one is asleep one does not feel distress in the presence of an object that would emit an unpleasant sound. However, when that person is awake the same sound would be objectionable. Krishna advises Arjuna to wage the just war and rid himself of attachment to his loved ones which is causing him distress.

यं हि न व्यथयन्त्येते पुरुषं पुरुषर्षभ ।
समदुःखसुखं धीरं सोऽमृतत्वाय कल्पते ।। १५ ।।

yaṁ hi na vyathayanty ete puruṣaṁ puruṣarṣabha
samaduḥkhasukhaṁ dhīraṁ so 'mṛtatvāya kalpate

O Arjuna, Superior among men! One, who is equipoised in happiness or sadness caused due to attachment to sense organs and sense objects, is indeed eligible for liberation. (2.15)

Comments: Arjuna could argue that one way for him to avoid distress would be to avoid waging this war which could result in loss of loved ones. In this case, the issue of attachment does not arise. So, why not avoid the war? Lord Krishna says that waging a just war is Arjuna's duty and Arjuna can avoid distress only by ridding himself of attachment to his near and dear ones. Such an action will also result in Arjuna achieving liberation hereafter.

नासतो विद्यतेऽभावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः ।
उभयोरपि दृष्टोऽन्तस्त्वनयोस्तत्त्वदर्शिभिः ।। १६ ।।
nā 'sato vidyateSbhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ
ubhayor api dṛṣṭo 'ntas tv anayos tattvadarśibhiḥ

No good comes out of bad deeds. Also, there are no bad results from good deeds. The learned seers who have realized the Lord Almighty are convinced of these two facts. (2.16)

Comments: Arjuna has expressed concern that he will incur sins by killing elders and teachers during the war. However, these elders are on the side of evil and it is Arjuna's duty to fight for justice. In this verse, Krishna says that no sin is incurred by performing good deeds.

There is a second meaning to this verse as stated by Sri Rayaru in [GV]- Inert nature is not subject to creation and destruction, and hence is eternal. The Lord Almighty is also eternal and indestructible. These two concepts have been traditionally taught by knowledgeable seers.

How can one say that inert matter and the Lord Almighty are eternal, and not subject to creation and dissolution? Sri Rayaru in [GV] provides an answer by referring to the first line of this verse where - *asat* refers to prime material nature, *sat* refers to the Lord Almighty, *abhava* refers to *prag abhava* and *pradhwamsa abhava*, and *na vidyate* means 'does not exist'. This means that prime matter and the Lord Almighty do not have the conditions of the above *abhava* twins. Thus, the two entities are said to be eternal.

What are the *abhava* twins? This can be explained with an example. Before a potter creates a pot out of clay, the pot is said to have the condition of prior non-existence (*prag abhava*). When such a pot is destroyed, the pot is in the condition of post non-existence (*pradhwamsa abhava*). The material cause for the creation of the universe is inert nature. The Lord Almighty is the instrumental cause for the creation of the universe. Inert nature and the Lord Almighty are not subject to the conditions of prior non-existence (*prag abhava*) and post non-existence (*pradhwamsa abhava*), and thus are not subject to creation or destruction.

Sri Rayaru in [GV] quotes Sri Narahari Teertha [GBBPN] who in his commentary on the **Gita** had an additional interpretation for the use of the word '*api*' (meaning 'also') in this verse. This word when combined with the phrase 'learned seers', implies that the eternality

of inert nature and the Lord Almighty is known through the traditional teachings of learned seers and *also* through scriptural evidence from the epic **Vishnu Purana**.

Sri Vishwesha Teertha in his **Gita Saroddhara** [GS] provides a third interpretation for the first line in this verse by applying the concepts to living beings –the physical body that is subject to birth is not imperishable and the unborn soul does not perish.

Eternal, Indestructible Soul reflects the Lord

अविनाशि तु तद्विद्धि येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।
विनाशमव्ययस्यास्य न कश्चित् कर्तुमर्हति ॥ १७ ॥

avināśi tu tad viddhi yena sarvam idaṁ tatam
vināśam avyayasyā 'sya na kaścit kartum arhati

Know that entities that pervade the universe will not perish. No one can cause destruction to the imperishable. (2.17)

Comments: The entities referred to are not subject to decay and hence are imperishable and eternal. These entities include the Lord Almighty, individual souls, space (*avyakrita akasha*) and the letters (the 51 letters in the Sanskrit alphabet). Space is known as *avyakrita akasha* as it does not undergo transformation during creation or dissolution. It is single, eternal, and self-supporting.

अन्तवन्त इमे देहा नित्यस्योक्ताः शरीरिणः ।
अनशिनोऽप्रमेयस्य तस्माद् युध्यस्व भारत ॥ १८ ॥

antavanta ime dehā nityasyo 'ktāḥ śarīriṇaḥ
anāśino 'prameyasya tasmād yudhyasva bhārata

O Bharata! It is said that the eternal soul's visible physical body is perishable, but the Lord Almighty, the Supreme Soul, is imperishable (not subject to four-way destruction). Hence, fight this war as worship to the indwelling Lord Aprameya, the one who is not limited by space, time, or attributes. (2.18)

Comments: The individual soul is a reflection of the Lord as in a mirror. Some argue that when the mirror which they consider is *upadhi* (the conditioning medium) is destroyed, the reflection no longer exists. Sri Rayaru in [GV] explains that the *upadhi* in the example of a reflection in the mirror is the intrinsic body of the individual soul and not the physical body. The intrinsic body (*swaroopa deha)* of a soul never perishes. The Lord is eternal, has no blemishes, does not experience decay or destruction of body, as His body is transcendental. The individual soul's intrinsic body is also indestructible, and in that sense, the individual soul is deemed to have some similarity with the Lord. Hence the intrinsic body of the individual soul is the *upadhi* in the example of comparing the Lord and the individual soul to the original and the mirror reflection. Also, if the Lord Almighty and individual souls have similar attributes such as indestructibility, then why should one perform duties as a worship to the Lord? Firstly, the individual soul is dependent on the Lord and secondly, the Lord has special characteristics far and beyond those of individual souls. The Lord pervades everywhere. Sri Rayaru also states in [GV] that the Lord is not subject to the fourfold destruction – (i) of the body (as His body is transcendental), (ii) of the soul (as He is eternal), (iii) of attributes (as He is full of infinite auspicious attributes and is devoid of any blemishes) and (iv) of happiness (as

He is devoid of misery). He is superior to individual souls and hence is worthy of worship.

य एनं वेत्ति हन्तारं यश्चैनं मन्यते हतम् ।
उभौ तौ न विजानीतो नायं हन्ति न हन्यते ॥ १९ ॥
ya enaṁ vetti hantāraṁ yaś cai 'naṁ manyate hatam
ubhau tau na vijānīto nā 'yaṁ hanti na hanyate

One who thinks that one person has killed another person and the one who thinks that the second person has been killed, neither has true knowledge. No one can kill anyone else, and no one can be killed. (2.19)

Comments: Arjuna's distress is premised on his assumption that he may kill his elders and teachers in the war. However, no one can independently kill someone or get killed by someone. Further, no one experiences destruction of their soul and the Lord is the only independent entity. Hence, Arjuna's grief is misplaced.

न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचि–
न्नायं भूत्वा भविता वा न भूयः ।
अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो
न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे ॥ २० ॥
na jāyate mriyate vā kadācin nā 'yaṁ bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ
ajo nityaḥ śāśvato 'yaṁ purāṇo na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre

The soul is not subject to birth and death; it is eternal. It is not that the soul did not exist earlier and was born. It has no birth as it is eternal, and it is not subject to

decay. Even when the physical body is destroyed, the soul does not perish. (2.20)

Comments: This verse has origins in the **Katha Upanishat** and provides the scriptural reference to the concepts in the previous verse.

A second interpretation of this verse is as follows: The Lord does not experience bodily birth and death. All His incarnations such as Rama and Krishna are eternal, and from time to time He manifests Himself and makes Himself visible or invisible. The aspect of the Lord manifesting and making Himself visible is generally termed as His birth.

Many scriptures have references to the Lord being in the womb of His mother (for example Krishna being in the womb of Devaki) before being born. The Lord's existence in the womb is incidental to the storyline where the Lord continues to exist with infinite auspicious attributes and His condition is not like that of mortals who suffer in their mother's womb.

वेदाविनाशिनं नित्यं य एनमजमव्ययम् ।
कथं स पुरुषः पार्थ कं घातयति हन्ति कम् ।। २१ ।।

vedā 'vināśinaṁ nityaṁ ya enam ajam avyayam
kathaṁ sa puruṣaḥ pārtha kaṁ ghātayati hanti kam

O Partha! One who knows that the soul is eternal, that it does not perish, that it has no birth or death; how can that person cause death to someone and/or kill someone. (2.21)

Comments: The word '*vinasha*' also means weakness such as hatred which is caused by attachment. The soul

does not have these defects intrinsically, but a person gets them due to attachment. A wise person who does not have such defects (*avinashi*) will know the true nature of individual souls and the Supreme Soul and will know that no one can cause death to someone else.

वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय
नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि ।
तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णा–
न्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही ॥ २२ ॥

vāsāṁsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya navāni gṛhṇāti naro 'parāṇi
tathā śarīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇāni anyāni saṁyāti navāni dehī

Just as a person lets go of worn out old clothes and adorns new clothes, likewise, a soul leaves a decaying body and takes on a new body. (2.22)

Comments: In this verse, there is further confirmation on the separation of the soul and the physical body. In verse (2.13), it was stated that a soul experiences transformation in a physical body as a person transitions through childhood, youth, adulthood, and old age. However, that was related to the same physical body. In this verse, it is clarified that the same soul will migrate from a decayed body to a new body, just as one discards old, worn out clothes and replaces them with new, good clothes.

नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः ।
न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मारुतः ॥ २३ ॥

nai 'naṁ chindanti śastrāṇi nai 'naṁ dahati pāvakaḥ
na cai 'naṁ kledayanty āpo na śoṣayati mārutaḥ

Weapons cannot cut the soul, fire cannot burn the soul, water cannot wet the soul and wind cannot parch the soul. (2.23)

Comments: While it was made clear that the intrinsic body of a soul does not decay or get destroyed over time, some can question whether it would be possible to harm or destroy a soul with physical elements such as weapons (made from mining earth), fire, water, wind etc. In this verse it is clarified that it is not possible to harm or destroy a soul by any of these means. Further, as clarified by Sri Rayaru [GV], it is also not possible to destroy a soul through a curse (as in the episode of *Daksha Prajapati* having his head chopped off due to a curse, there was no destruction of his soul).

अच्छेद्योऽयमदाह्योऽयम् अक्लेद्योऽशोष्य एव च ।
नित्यः सर्वगतः स्थाणुरचलोऽयं सनातनः ।। २४ ।।
acchedyo 'yam adāhyo 'yam akledyo 'śoṣya eva ca
nityaḥ sarvagataḥ sthāṇur acalo 'yaṁ sanātanaḥ

The soul cannot be cut, cannot be burnt, cannot be drowned, and cannot be parched. The soul is eternal, atomic in size, and exists under the purview of the immutable, omnipresent Lord (who is known through the **Vedas**). (2.24)

Comments: The previous verse (2.23) refers to a soul's indestructible nature in current time as well as in the past. This verse further clarifies that a soul's indestructible nature applies to future time also.

अव्यक्तोऽयमचिन्त्योऽयम् अविकार्योऽयमुच्यते ।
तस्मादेवं विदित्वैनं नानुशोचितुमर्हसि ।। २५ ।।

avyakto ’yam acintyo ’yam avikaryo ’yam ucyate
tasmād evaṁ viditvai ’naṁ nā ’nuśocitum arhasi

The scriptures say that The Lord cannot be visualized by sense organs, He cannot be comprehended, and He is not subject to decay. Arjuna, knowing this you should focus on performing your duty as an offering to the Lord and quit grieving. (2.25)

Comments: The previous verse indicated that the Lord is omnipresent. If so, and if the Lord is resident in all beings, then why is He not visible? This verse answers this question by stating that no one can comprehend the Lord’s attributes and that He is also capable of possessing contradictory attributes.

अथ चैनं नित्यजातं नित्यं वा मन्यसे मृतम् ।
तथाऽपि त्वं महाबाहो नैनं शोचितुमर्हसि ।। २६ ।।
atha cai ’naṁ nityajātaṁ nityaṁ vā manyase mṛtam
tathā ’pi tvaṁ mahābāho nai ’vaṁ śocitum arhasi

जातस्य हि ध्रुवो मृत्युर्ध्रुवं जन्म मृतस्य च ।
तस्मादपरिहार्येऽर्थे न त्वं शोचितुमर्हसि ।। २७ ।।
jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyur dhruvaṁ janma mṛtasya ca
tasmād aparihārye ’rthe na tvaṁ śocitum arhasi

O Arjuna (the one with strong arms)! When you know that living beings are born and will inevitably die, there is no point in grieving over them. (2.26)

Death is certain for anyone born and likewise rebirth is certain for anyone dead. There is no point in grieving over an issue that has no solution. (2.27)

Comments: The soul does not perish. However, Arjuna could argue that the loss of the physical bodies of dear ones can also causes grief, as he would not be able to see them. Verse 2.27 answers this question by stating the birth and death of physical bodies is inevitable for everyone and there is no point in grieving over this issue that has no solution.

अव्यक्तादीनि भूतानि व्यक्तमध्यानि भारत ।
अव्यक्तनिधनान्येव तत्र का परिदेवना ।। २८ ।।
avyaktādīni bhūtāni vyaktamadhyāni bhārata
avyaktanidhanāny eva tatra kā paridevanā

O Bharata! Living beings get a body between birth and death from inert, material nature and the body will merge back with inert nature after death. Why grieve over such a body? (2.28)

Comments: While it was made clear that everyone experiences birth and death due to their physical bodies, what causes birth and death? This verse reveals that birth and death are caused by interaction with material nature. The physical body is made up of a certain proportion of the five basic elements of nature. When a soul gets a body from material nature it is termed as birth, and when it loses the body back to material nature it is termed as death. A soul that is dependent on the Lord has no control over the process of birth and death. So, it is not worth grieving over such a temporary body.

After conquering the snake Kalinga, Krishna and other yadavas were spending a night in the forest. They were faced with the onset of rapidly approaching forest fire.

Lord Krishna extinguished this fire by swallowing it. Saint Sri Vadiraja in [RV] describes this incident to explain the fact that all elements of nature emanate from the Lord and submerge back into Him.

आश्चर्यवत् पश्यति कश्चिदेन–
माश्चर्यवद् वदति तथैव चान्यः ।
आश्चर्यवच्चैनमन्यः शृणोति
श्रुत्वाऽप्येनं वेद न चैव कश्चित् ।। २९ ।।

āścaryavat paśyati kaścid enam āścaryavad vadati tathai 'va cā 'nyaḥ
āścaryavac cai 'nam anyaḥ śṛṇoti śrutvā 'py enaṁ veda na cai 'va kaścit

Some look at the Lord in amazement. Some talk about Him in amazement. Some hear about Him in amazement. No one can completely understand Him even after hearing a lot about Him. (2.29)

Comments: While it was made clear previously that individual souls are not independent, one can ask who they are dependent on. This verse explains that the sole independent entity in the universe is the Lord Almighty. It also answers that there are no other independent entities that can equal the Lord. While many people can claim to know the attributes of the Lord, this verse makes it clear that only some visualize the Lord with amazement. Just as one cannot find any comparison to the sky or the ocean, no one can find any comparison to the Lord. He is truly incomparable. For one to get over grief that may arise from any activity, one must focus on performing one's duty as an offering to the Lord. So, it is important for one to appreciate the true greatness of the Lord.

देही नित्यमवध्योऽयं देहे सर्वस्य भारत ।
तस्मात् सर्वाणि भूतानि न त्वं शोचितुमर्हसि ॥ ३० ॥
dehī nityam avadhyo 'yaṁ dehe sarvasya bhārata
tasmāt sarvāṇi bhūtāni na tvaṁ śocitum arhasi

O Bharata! The soul inside the physical body cannot be destroyed even if the physical body perishes (as it is protected by the Lord). So, there is no need to grieve over anyone. (2.30)

Comments: In verse (2.12), it was stated that the individual souls are also by their nature eternal. How then can one say that they are dependent on the Lord? Sri Rayaru in [GV] explains that the Lord protects and controls all bodies that envelope an individual soul, namely – the intrinsic body (*swaroopa deha*), the subtle body (*linga deha*) and the gross physical body (*sthoola deha*). This verse thus explains another aspect of the Lord's greatness.

Fighting a Just War is Arjuna's Duty

स्वधर्ममपि चावेक्ष्य न विकम्पितुमर्हसि ।
धर्म्याद्धि युद्धाच्छ्रेयोऽन्यत् क्षत्रियस्य न विद्यते ॥३१।
svadharmam api cā 'vekṣya na vikampitum arhasi
dharmyād dhi yuddhāc chreyo 'nyat kṣatriyasya na vidyate

Knowing that fighting a just war is your duty, there is no need for you to be petrified. For a person hailing from a ruling *(kshatriya*) class, there is no loftier duty than fighting for a just cause. (2.31)

Comments: In verse (1.29), Arjuna had said that he was trembling as he was overcome with grief. In this

verse, the Lord responds to that condition. Previously He had declared that Arjuna need not grieve over the loss of near and dear ones as their souls never perish. Now Krishna says that in addition, it is Arjuna's compulsory duty to fight the Kauravas to end their misrule and there is nothing more important than this. Thus, there is absolutely no need for Arjuna to feel weak and helpless.

यदृच्छया चोपपन्नं स्वर्गद्वारमपावृतम् ।
सुखिनः क्षत्रियाः पार्थ लभन्ते युद्धमीदृशम् ।। ३२ ।।

yadṛcchayā co 'papannaṁ svargadvāram apāvṛtam
sukhinaḥ kṣatriyāḥ pārtha labhante yuddham īdṛśam

O Partha! Blessed are those in the *kshatriya* class who get an opportunity to do the right deed by fighting for a just cause. This opens the doors for heavens hereafter. (2.32)

Comments: Not all kshatriyas get an opportunity to wage a just war. So, when such an opportunity has been given to Arjuna without any effort (and by the Grace of the Lord), he should embrace the opportunity which would open for him, the doors to heavens hereafter.

अथ चेत् त्वमिमं धर्म्यं संग्रामं न करिष्यसि ।
ततः स्वधर्मं कीर्तिं च हित्वा पापमवाप्स्यसि ।। ३३ ।।

atha cet tvam imaṁ dharmyaṁ saṅgrāmaṁ na kariṣyasi
tataḥ svadharmaṁ kīrtiṁ ca hitvā pāpam avāpsyasi

In case you decide to relinquish your responsibility to fight for a just cause, you will be guilty of abdicating duty, you will suffer loss of reputation here and accrue sins. (2.33)

Comments: To convince Arjuna that it is a duty, not an option, for him to fight the war, Krishna now indicates the outcome for Arjuna if he does not fight. Arjuna would suffer loss of reputation in this world and accrue sins for abdicating his responsibility, with consequences hereafter.

अकीर्तिं चापि भूतानि कथयिष्यन्ति तेऽव्ययाम् ।
सम्भावितस्य चाकीर्तिर्मरणादतिरिच्यते ।। ३४ ।।
akīrtiṁ cāpi bhūtāni kathayiṣyanti te 'vyayām
saṁbhāvitasya cākīrtir maraṇāt atiricyate

Everyone will talk about your loss of reputation and for a worthy person loss of reputation is more dreadful than death. (2.34)

Comments: Krishna indicates that the negative effect of refusing to fight is permanent loss of reputation. For someone who is revered among professional peers, a loss of reputation can be worse than defeat and death.

भयाद्रणादुपरतं मंस्यन्ते त्वां महारथाः ।
येषां च त्वं बहुमतो भूत्वा यास्यसि लाघवम् ।। ३५।।
bhayād raṇād uparataṁ maṁsyante tvāṁ mahārathāḥ
yeṣāṁ ca tvaṁ bahumato bhūtvā yāsyasi lāghavam

Great warriors will conclude that you ran away from the battlefield as you were afraid to fight. You will be disgraced in front of those who hold you in great esteem. (2.35)

Comments: This verse responds to Arjuna's argument that his opposition to fighting the war was due to his compassion and not due to fear of losing. Krishna says

that Arjuna was held in high esteem as a great warrior based on his winning many battles, and other great warriors can now conclude that Arjuna ran away from the war as he was afraid of facing them. After all, many other participants in this war (on both sides) would also lose their near and dear ones and they had not backed away.

अवाच्यवादांश्च बहून् वदिष्यन्ति तवाहिताः ।
निन्दन्तस्तव सामर्थ्यं ततो दुःखतरं नु किम् ।। ३६ ।।
avācyavādāṁś ca bahūn vadiṣyanti tavā 'hitāḥ
nindantas tava sāmarthyaṁ tato duḥkhataraṁ nu kim

Your enemies will talk disparagingly about your valor in many unspeakable ways. What is more dreadful than this? (2.36)

Comments: To further convince Arjuna of the perils of backing away from fighting, Krishna says that in addition to other great warriors assembled there, many enemies of Arjuna whom he had defeated earlier could now conclude and spread the word that Arjuna was incapable of fighting a war. This could be extremely insulting, especially for a *kshatriya*.

हतो वा प्राप्स्यसि स्वर्गं जित्वा वा भोक्ष्यसे महीम् ।
तस्मादुत्तिष्ठ कौन्तेय युद्धाय कृतनिश्चयः ।। ३७ ।।
hato vā prāpsyasi svargaṁ jitvā vā bhokṣyase mahīm
tasmād uttiṣṭha kaunteya yuddhāya kṛtaniścayaḥ

If you fight and die in this battle, you are sure to reach heaven. If you win, you will rule this world. O Son of Kunti! Rise up and fight this battle with strong determination. (2.37)

Comments: In verse (2.6), Arjuna had expressed his doubt about whether it was better for the Pandavas to win the war or for the Kauravas to win. Krishna responds to that doubt here. After discussing the impact to Arjuna's reputation of backing away from a just war, Krishna now goes on to convince him that he is in a win-win situation and has nothing to lose by fighting the war. If Arjuna were to win this war, he would get back the kingdom and reach heavens hereafter for adhering to his duties. If he were to lose the war and die, he would surely reach the heavens for his efforts in fighting evil. Either way, he wins.

सुखदुःखे समे कृत्वा लाभालाभौ जयाजयौ ।
ततो युद्धाय युज्यस्व नैवं पापमवाप्स्यसि ॥ ३८ ॥
sukhaduḥkhe same kṛtvā lābhālābhau jayājayau
tato yuddhāya yujyasva nai 'vaṁ pāpam avāpsyasi

Treat happiness and sadness, profit and loss, victory and defeat with equal poise and fight for justice. You will not be tainted with sin. (2.38)

Comments: In verse (1.36), Arjuna had said that he may accrue sins by fighting the war, as that would result in loss of life to many. Krishna answers that point by stating that performing one's prescribed duty as an offering to the Lord will not attract sins and in fact will help accrue positive credit. One must treat with equanimity, happiness and sadness, profit and loss, victory and defeat in all actions and perform them as offerings to the Lord. Arjuna must get over any sadness due to the loss of near and dear ones and focus on performing his duty.

Instrument to Acquire Knowledge

एषा तेऽभिहिता सांख्ये बुद्धिर्योगे त्विमां शृणु ।
बुद्ध्या युक्तो यया पार्थ कर्मबन्धं प्रहास्यसि ।। ३९।।
eṣā te 'bhihitā sāṅkhye buddhir yoge tv imāṁ śṛṇu
buddhyā yukto yayā pārtha karmabandhaṁ prahāsyasi

O Partha! You have been told about the nature of *Sankhya* (knowledge) so far. Now listen to the ways (*yoga*) to achieve that knowledge which will free you from bondage. (2.39)

Comments: From verses (2.12) to (2.38), Krishna gave Arjuna knowledge (*sankhya*) about the Lord and the individual souls. From now on, He teaches Arjuna the methods and procedures of acquiring such knowledge after which Arjuna would be able to perform his prescribed duties with conviction, realize the Lord, get over worldly bondage and achieve the state of eternal bliss (*moksha*). While previous verses discussed the nature of individual souls and briefly, the nature of the Supreme Lord, from now on till the end of Chapter 6, more details about the methods and procedures to learn about the nature of the Lord are provided. Also, so far Krishna addressed Arjuna's specific situation and from now on, the teachings turn generic in that they would apply to the whole of mankind.

नेहाभिक्रमनाशोऽस्ति प्रत्यवायो न विद्यते ।
स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात् ।। ४० ।।
ne'hā 'bhikramanāśo 'sti pratyavāyo na vidyate
svalpam apy asya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt

Even if one falters in the beginning during the learning of this spiritual knowledge, no effort is wasted. Even a little sincere effort will protect one from great peril. (2.40)

Comments: This verse answers the doubts that some may have about the efforts required to achieve spiritual knowledge. Given the significant efforts required, what would happen if one could not complete the task? The Lord states that no effort is wasted. Even if someone starts the process and for some reason gets interrupted, the efforts will yield positive results. Any sincere effort will please the Lord and through His grace one will be able to achieve spiritual awakening.

व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिरेकेह कुरुनन्दन ।
बहुशाखा ह्यनन्ताश्च बुद्धयोऽव्यवसायिनाम् ॥ ४१ ॥
vyavasāyātmikā buddhir eke ’ha kurunandana
bahuśākhā hy anantāś ca buddhayo ’vyavasāyinām

O Scion of Kuru Dynasty (Arjuna)! There is only one teaching that leads to decisive spiritual knowledge. There are endless teachings that lead the undecided ones to diverse, wrong knowledge. (2.41)

Comments: There are different teachings (often contradictory) about spiritual knowledge. How then does then one know the true path? Krishna in this verse categorically states that only true teaching leads to proper divine, spiritual knowledge. This is based on evidence from revered spiritual texts such as the **Vedas** and is realized from following the Vaishnava path which enunciates the supremacy of Lord Vishnu as the supreme of all souls. In the next few verses (from 2.41 to 2.46), the Lord clears any doubts about the true purport of the **Vedas**.

It is interesting to note that the Lord refers to Arjuna as Kurunandana, meaning ‘Scion of the Kuru dynasty who would bring joy to his lineage’. Probably implying that the majority of the descendants of the Kuru dynasty such as Duryodhana and his 99 brothers belong to the type of people who believe in various, wrong teachings. Arjuna is different and is capable of dispelling his doubts and regaining the spiritual knowledge he had already possessed.

यामिमां पुष्पितां वाचं प्रवदन्त्यविपश्चितः ।
वेदवादरताः पार्थ नान्यदस्तीति वादिनः ॥ ४२ ॥
yām imāṁ puṣpitāṁ vācaṁ pravadanty avipaścitaḥ
vedavādaratāḥ pārtha nā ’nyad astī ’ti vādinaḥ

कामात्मानः स्वर्गपरा जन्मकर्मफलप्रदाम् ।
क्रियाविशेषबहुलां भोगैश्वर्यगतिं प्रति ॥ ४३ ॥
kāmātmānaḥ svargaparā janmakarmaphalapradām
kriyāviśeṣabahulāṁ bhogaiśvaryagatiṁ prati

O Partha! Those with peripheral knowledge of the **Vedas** say that attaining heavens should be the only goal of following the **Vedas**, ignoring the lofty goal of liberation (*moksha)*. They only focus on temporary worldly riches and pleasures that they believe are the end goals of conducting Vedic rituals. (2.42) (2.43)

Comments: As the **Vedas** can be interpreted in multiple ways, many focus only on the peripheral interpretation and conclude that the Vedic texts teach rituals only to appease lesser deities, which would result in achieving desired riches and materialistic happiness in this lifetime and enjoying heavenly fruits hereafter. Krishna categorically

speaks against this viewpoint and strongly advises that the real purport of the **Vedas** is to help one achieve liberation, the state of everlasting, pure and complete bliss (*Moksha*), and not riches and heavens which are temporary. Using the **Vedas** only to reach the heavens would be like plucking a flower from a tree, without waiting for the flower to fully transform into a fruit (which represents *Moksha*).

भोगैश्वर्यप्रसक्तानां तयाऽपहृतचेतसाम् ।

व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिः समाधौ न विधीयते ।। ४४ ।।

bhogaiśvaryaprasaktānāṁ tayā 'pahṛtacetasām
vyavasāyātmikā buddhiḥ samādhau na vidhīyate

With their minds corrupted with such wrong thinking, they immerse themselves in pursuit of worldly pleasures and will not have the conviction to pursue correct knowledge and the concentration to focus their minds on the Lord. (2.44)

Comments: What would be wrong in enjoying the riches achieved by performing Vedic rituals with sincerity? After all these fruits have been earned using legitimate, moral means as enunciated in the **Vedas**. Lord Krishna responds by saying that indulgence in such temporary pleasures will focus their minds only on material issues and their minds will not be able meditate on the Lord. Concentrated meditation is required to gain proper spiritual knowledge.

Vedas – Peripheral and Inner Meanings

त्रैगुण्यविषया वेदा निस्त्रैगुण्यो भवार्जुन ।

निर्द्वन्द्वो नित्यसत्त्वस्थो निर्योगक्षेम आत्मवान् ।। ४५।।

traiguṇyaviṣayā vedā nistraiguṇyo bhavā ’rjuna
nirdvandvo nityasatvastho niryogakṣema ātmavān

O Arjuna! Peripherally the **Vedas** appear to describe rituals that result in attainment of heavenly and worldly fruits made up of the three attributes. Do not aspire for these. Go beyond dualities (such as pleasure and pain). Focus your mind on the Lord Almighty and leave it to the Lord to help you attain your goals and to help you protect goals already attained. (2.45)

Comments: The Lord continues to teach about the real purport of the **Vedas**. In this verse, the Lord instructs that one should not focus on the peripheral meaning of the **Vedas** that appear to provide details of rituals to help achieve worldly fruits. These fruits and even heavens that one may achieve are borne out of material nature which is a mixture of three attributes – *sat*, *rajas* and *tamas*. As such these are not permanent, and even if one reaches the heavens, one is bound to fall back to earth after expending merits from good deeds. One should detach oneself from *yoga* (striving for proscribed material entities not already owned) and *kshema* (protecting proscribed material entities already possessed). The real purport of the **Vedas** is to describe the nature of the Lord Almighty. One should focus on the Lord who will help one achieve everlasting bliss (*nirvana*).

यावानर्थ उदपाने सर्वतः सम्प्लुतोदके ।
तावान् सर्वेषु वेदेषु ब्राह्मणस्य विजानतः ।। ४६ ।।

yāvān artha udapāne sarvataḥ saṁplutodake
tāvān sarveṣu vedeṣu brāhmaṇasya vijānataḥ

The benefit derived from a small body of water such as a well is better derived from a sumptuous water body such as an ocean. Likewise, benefits derived from following Vedic rituals with proper meaning are surely available for one with special knowledge who has realized the Lord Almighty. (2.46)

Comments: In previous verses, it was indicated that the real purport of the **Vedas** is in understanding of the Lord and not in transient material benefits including attaining the heavens. It was made clear that one who goes by the peripheral meaning of the **Vedas** and performs rituals only to attain transient material benefits will never achieve everlasting bliss. A question arises as to whether the seeker who goes by the inner meaning of the **Vedas** and realizes the Lord will be eligible for transient fruits such as the heavens. This verse answers that question through an example. Just as the benefits available from well water are available from a larger body of water such as a lake or an ocean, one who has realized the Lord by proper understanding of the **Vedas** will surely achieve transient benefits such as heavens, even when one is not focused on them.

Sri Raghavendra Swamy in his **Gita Vivruti** [GV] provides an explanation for the words *brahmana* (one who has realized the Lord) and *vijanatha* (one who has special knowledge) where both appear to mean the same thing. Sri Rayaru says that *vijanatha* indicates the one who has *paroksha* (or indirect) knowledge of the Lord and *brahmana* indicates one who has gone a step further and has realized *aparoksha* or direct knowledge of the Lord. In that sense, for one to obtain direct knowledge of the

Lord, one must first start by learning about the knowledge indirectly (through a qualified teacher, studying Vedic scriptures etc.).

Sri Rayaru provides a second meaning for this verse, by interpreting the Sanskrit terms *samplutodaka* and *udapana* differently. Earlier *samplutodaka* referred to a large body of water (ex: an ocean) and *udapana* referred to a small body of water (ex: well). Sri Rayaru provides a second meaning for these terms. *Samplutodaka* means the ocean that dissolves the universe during the grand dissolution and *udapana* refers to the Lord Almighty who protects the eternal entities in the universe such as souls, time etc. With this interpretation, the verse can also be translated to mean as follows: Whatever advantage (such as *dharma, moksha* etc.) is obtained through the Grace of the Lord Almighty who protects everything during the great dissolution of the universe, the same advantage will be accrued by a seeker who has realized the Lord through proper interpretation of the **Vedas**.

Duty is Worship

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥ ४७ ॥

karmaṇy evā ’dhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana
mā karmaphalahetur bhūr mā te saṅgo 'stv akarmaṇi

You only have the right to do your duty, and never to its fruits. Never perform your duties with expectations of outcomes. At the same time, never think about relinquishing your duties. (2.47)

Comments: This is probably the most commented upon verse in the **Gita**. It answers the question as to the purpose of performing ones' prescribed duties when there is no guarantee of getting expected results. Even if someone does not see any immediate material benefits from performing ones' prescribed duties, such actions will please the Lord. They will result in one obtaining true knowledge about the Lord and eventually achieving everlasting bliss. This is implied in the first line of this verse. Another question that one can raise is the purpose of someone performing any action at all, as earlier in verse (2.45), it was stated that one should always focus one's mind on the Lord. The second line of this verse answers this question by stating that in addition to focusing the mind on the Lord, one must perform prescribed duties, else one will accrue sins due to relinquishing of duties. In addition to the philosophical reasons, we can all appreciate the fact that for a society to function smoothly, every one of us must play our assigned roles with diligence and sincerity. Such activities, especially when performed as an offering to the Lord, will help us receive the Lord's grace to help us in our spiritual journey. Lord Krishna is instructing Arjuna here that he should not shirk from his prescribed duty of fighting for a just cause, just because he is uncomfortable with the thought of losing his loved ones.

Sri Rayaru [GV] also provides a second meaning for this verse. He translates the phrase '*karma phala hetu*' (the entity responsible to grant fruits for actions) as the Lord Almighty, as He alone can grant someone the fruits. As per verse (2.45), one should not consider oneself identical to the Lord as the Lord is supreme and He alone

can grant one's wishes. The second interpretation of this verse is as follows: Arjuna! Individual souls can only perform prescribed duties. They do not have the ability to obtain the fruits by themselves. That ability is only with the Lord. Individual souls are quite different and are subservient to the Lord and hence one should never consider oneself as the Lord.

Sri Rayaru [GV] also provides convincing responses to many other deep, philosophical questions in his interpretation of this verse. Following is the summary:

* Even those who have already realized the Lord have to keep performing duties.

* For one who has already realized the Lord, any additional credit from performing duties will result in buoyant happiness in *moksha* (the level of bliss in *moksha* is dependent on the innate capabilities of souls, but additional credits will result in buoyant happiness, just like when milk boils over, the amount of milk does not change but the milk exhibits more buoyancy)

* No one is exempt from performing their prescribed duties

* While this verse indicates that one should not perform duties with an expectation of the outcome, it is not prohibited for someone to perform activities with loftier expectations of spiritual knowledge and the Lord's Grace. One should avoid expectations of temporary, transient, material fruits.

* Although phrases such as '*swarga kamo yajeta*' prescribe rituals for fulfilment of mundane desires, the scriptures do not mandate such actions for desire fulfilment.

* Major distinction between individual beings and the Lord in the context of duties and fruits:

    * Individual Beings: Have responsibility to perform duties. Cannot grant wishes.

    * Lord Almighty: Has no prescribed responsibility. Can grant wishes.

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनंजय ।
सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥ ४८ ॥
yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgaṁ tyaktvā dhanañjaya
siddhyasiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvaṁ yoga ucyate

O Dhananjaya! On your spiritual path (*yoga*), perform duties without attachments and expectations of results. The real *yoga* is performing one's duties without expectations and with equanimity. (2.48)

Comments: From verses (2.48) onwards, the Lord provides more details on the concept of *nishkama karma* (performing prescribed duties without expectations). In the previous verse (2.47), the Lord instructs Arjuna never to think of relinquishing prescribed duties. This verse responds to the question as to how one should perform prescribed duties. *Yoga* is having no expectations of results from duties performed *and* being equanimous to positive or negative outcomes. These are not two separate definitions of *yoga*.

Sri Vidyasagara Madhava Teertha has provided a detailed description of a *yogi* identified in this verse as –

* one whose mind and intellect are transfixed at the feet of the Lord with the knowledge of the Lord's omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience.
* one who engages in actions without attachment to the act itself or the fruits of such actions.
* one who engages in all activities only to please the Lord and as a service to the Lord.
* one who, knowing fully well that everything is at the will and command of the Lord, accepts success or failure with equanimity.

दूरेण ह्यवरं कर्म बुद्धियोगाद् धनंजय ।
बुद्धौ शरणमन्विच्छ कृपणाः फलहेतवः ।। ४९ ।।
dūreṇa hy avaraṁ karma buddhiyogād dhanañjaya
buddhau śaraṇam anviccha kṛpaṇāḥ phalahetavaḥ

O Dhananjaya! Performing duties with expectation of the outcome is very inferior to the task of attaining divine spiritual knowledge. Wretched are those who motive is fruit of action. Focus your mind on spiritual knowledge. (2.49)

Comments: In (2.46), it was indicated that one should avoid performing Vedic rituals for temporary gains but instead focus on the inner meaning of **the Vedas** to attain proper spiritual knowledge. In that sense, performing duties with expectation of material outcome is inferior to the task of attaining divine knowledge. This verse answers

the question as to the reason for this distinction. One who is focused only on activities yielding temporary gains will realize sooner or later that such gains will not last and will start feeling miserable. Hence there is no point in performing activities with such expectations.

Sri Rayaru [GV] also provides an alternate interpretation for the second half of this verse in response to a question as to whether someone who has already attained spiritual knowledge can consider themselves as one with the Lord. By interpreting the phrase *phala hetava* (the one who grants wishes) as referring to the Lord, Sri Rayaru says that even those who have attained spiritual knowledge will not claim identity with the Lord as such a claim would lead to unending misery.

बुद्धियुक्तो जहातीह उभे सुकृतदुष्कृते ।
तस्माद्योगाय युज्यस्व योगः कर्मसु कौशलम् ॥ ५०॥
buddhiyukto jahātī 'ha ubhe sukṛtaduṣkṛte
tasmād yogāya yujyasva yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam

One who has realized the Lord Almighty will be rid of the consequences of good or bad deeds. Therefore, focus on performing your duties with the goal of achieving divine, spiritual knowledge. This is the best path. (2.50)

Comments: In the previous verse (2.49), it was indicated that activities performed with expectations of material gains are inferior to the activities pursued in attaining divine knowledge.

That technique which steers one clear of worldly entanglement and ushers one towards the transcendental is 'skill in action' (*karmasu kauśalam*). In this verse, some

of the special advantages of these superior activities are outlined. It is indicated that one who has realized the Lord will be rid of the consequences of good and bad deeds which is the essential last step in achieving *moksha.* A question that would arise naturally is about the reason for consequences of even good deeds to be nullified. Sri Rayaru in [GV] provides an answer. Good deeds are of two kinds – one that leads to more clarity in divine knowledge and more exuberant happiness in *moksha (ishta punya),* and ones (*anishta punya*) that do not. Credits from good deeds of the second kind must be used up in this world (in current or future births) while credits from the first kind of good deed will be carried forward till one achieves *moksha*. The Lord categorically states that among all activities, those that lead to attainment of divine knowledge is supreme.

Sri Rayaru [GV] provides a second interpretation for the second half of this verse. One can ask the question - If one feels that one can put in all required efforts to attain spiritual knowledge (which is the goal for achieving *moksha*), why should one perform activities without expectations on material outcomes? Sri Rayaru answers saying that only activities that are performed for the sole purpose of pleasing the Lord and obtaining divine knowledge will lead to *moksha.*

Sri Madinur Vishnu Teertha Swamiji in his **Gita Saroddhara** [BGS] indicates that this verse reflects the summary of entire chapter 2. This is very appropriate as in this chapter Arjuna in verses (2.4) to (2.8) had expressed the conflict in his mind about his course of action and requested Krishna for guidance. Krishna categorically

states in this verse that one needs to perform one's prescribed duty with the goal of achieving divine, spiritual knowledge and that Arjuna needs to engage himself in fighting this holy war to protect his citizens.

कर्मजं बुद्धियुक्ता हि फलं त्यक्त्वा मनीषिणः ।
जन्मबन्धविनिर्मुक्ताः पदं गच्छन्त्यनामयम् ॥ ५१ ॥
karmajaṁ buddhiyuktā hi phalaṁ tyaktvā manīṣiṇaḥ
janmabandhavinirmuktāḥ padaṁ gacchhanty anāmayam

The wise who have learnt about the supremacy of the Lord Almighty, dedicate the fruits of their labour to the Lord and acquire direct, divine knowledge (*aparoksha jnana*). They escape the cycle of births and deaths and reach the state of eternal bliss. (2.51)

Comments: In this verse, the Lord provides additional benefits of obtaining proper spiritual knowledge (*aparoksha jnana* = direct, divine knowledge) which results in attaining *moksha.* One who reaches *moksha* will not only be devoid of sadness or blemishes but will also permanently escape the cycle of births and deaths. Lord Krishna is emphasizing the permanence of *moksha* as opposed to the transitory benefits of heavens. Sri Rayaru in [GV] explains the reason for interpreting the word '*manīṣiṇaḥ*' as the one with direct, divine knowledge (*aparoksha jnana*). The word '*manīṣi*' means incredibly special knowledge, and direct divine knowledge certainly qualifies for this description.

यदा ते मोहकलिलं बुद्धिर्व्यतितरिष्यति ।
तदा गन्तासि निर्वेदं श्रोतव्यस्य श्रुतस्य च ॥ ५२ ॥

yadā te mohakalilaṁ buddhir vyatitariṣyati
tadā gantāsi nirvedaṁ śrotavyasya śrutasya

Once your mind is cleansed of ignorant viewpoints, you will derive full benefits from the teachings you have heard so far and the teachings you will hear in future. (2.52)

Comments: Lord Krishna answers the question as to how and when one will be able to properly understand teachings delivered so far and the teachings yet to be delivered. One has to first cleanse one's mind of ignorant viewpoints which will then allow one's mind to grasp the teachings properly.

श्रुतिविप्रतिपन्ना ते यथा स्थास्यति निश्चला ।
समाधावचला बुद्धिस्तदा योगमवाप्स्यसि ।। ५३ ।।
śruti-vipratipannā te yadā sthāsyati niścalā
samādhāv acalā buddhis tadā yogam avāpsyasi

Once you develop conviction in spiritual teachings, your mind will become steadfast. At that time, you will be able to follow the path of divine knowledge. (2.53)

Comments: In (2.52), it was indicated that one must rid oneself of ignorant viewpoints. In this verse, the questions about what ignorant viewpoints really are and how one could be rid of them are answered. Ignorant viewpoints are those that are not supported by authentic scriptures such as the **Vedas**. Ones who have developed strong conviction about teachings from scriptures such as the **Vedas** will be able to rid themselves of ignorant viewpoints without any doubts. They will then be ready to focus their minds on the Lord which will lead to eternal bliss through the grace of the Lord.

Sri Rayaru [GV] provides a second interpretation of this verse based on Sri Madhwacharya's commentary in [GTN] where the phrase '*shruti vipratipanna*' is interpreted alternately as '*shruti visheshena pratipanna*' to mean – one with the right viewpoint based on authentic scriptures (*shruti*). Based on this, the verse can be interpreted to mean the following – The one who has realized the Lord based on proper understanding of the **Vedas** will have one's mind firmly placed on the Lord and will eventually attain *moksha* through the Lord's grace.

Equanimity and Mental Tranquility

अर्जुन उवाच ।

स्थितप्रज्ञस्य का भाषा समाधिस्थस्य केशव ।

स्थितधीः किं प्रभाषेत किमासीत व्रजेत किम् ।। ५४।।

arjuna uvāca: sthitaprajñasya kā bhāṣā samādhisthasya keśava
sthitadhīḥ kiṁ prabhāṣeta kim āsīta vrajeta kim

Arjuna said:

O Keshava! What are the characteristics of a person who has developed unwavering conviction in divine, spiritual knowledge (*Stita Prajna*)? How does that person talk or sit or walk (in other words, why does that person need to engage in any activity)? (2.54)

Comments: This is perhaps one of the most widely quoted verse from the **Gita**. After listening to the Lord's teachings about the need for one to perform prescribed duties without expectations, focusing the mind on the Lord and related topics, Arjuna is now curious to know

the characteristics of a person who has developed unwavering conviction (tranquil mind) in divine knowledge. It is interesting that he uses the term ‘*bhasha*’ to mean characteristics instead of the more common word ‘*lakshana*’. Arjuna, by using the term ‘*samadhi*’ (state of complete mental concentration on the Lord), has himself defined a characteristic (*lakshana*) of a person with deep conviction in divine knowledge. By using the word ‘*bhasha*’, Arjuna is enquiring about the characteristic of such a person when that person is out of *samadhi* and engaged in normal day to day activities. References to talking, sitting, walking etc., in this verse are implying normal day today activities. In other words, Arjuna wants to know how the person with firm resolve performs day to day activities (when not in state of *samadhi*).

Sri Rayaru [GV] also provides a second interpretation for this verse as follows: Why does one who has achieved divine knowledge need to perform activities such as talking, sitting, walking etc.? Here the word ‘*kim*’ is used to mean ‘why’. In that sense it is a rhetorical question. Why should someone who has already achieved the state of *samadhi* and has developed unwavering conviction about the Lord indulge in any mundane, day to day worldly activities?

The Lord responds to Arjuna’s questions in the remaining verses of this chapter which undoubtedly form the core teachings of the **Gita**.

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

प्रजहाति यदा कामान् सर्वान् पार्थ मनोगतान् ।

आत्मन्येवाऽत्मना तुष्टः स्थितप्रज्ञस्तदोच्यते ।। ५५ ।।

śrībhagavān uvāca: prajahāti yadā kāmān sarvān pārtha manogatān
ātmany evā 'tmanā tuṣṭaḥ sthitaprajñas tadocyate

The Lord said:

O Partha! One who has conquered mental blemishes such as desire and has focused mind on the Lord Almighty will achieve mental tranquility by the grace of the Lord. (2.55)

Comments: The Lord answers Arjuna's question (2.54) from (2.55) onwards till the end of this chapter. For the rhetorical question in the second line of (2.54), the Lord answers in verse (2.69). While desire is mentioned as a blemish that one needs to conquer, this also applies to other blemishes such as greed, anger, hatred etc. Note that desire here refers to worldly desires and not lofty desires such as achieving divine knowledge. Sri Rayaru [GV] explains the special reason for the use of the word '*manogatan*' (mental) in this verse. Blemishes such as desire, greed, anger etc., originate in the mind. That being the case, what is the reason for using the qualifier 'mental' in 'mental blemishes'? The divine knowledge that one would attain by the grace of the Lord also manifests in the same mind. For the same mind to attain divine knowledge, it is necessary to be rid of worldly blemishes. It is to drive home the fact that divine knowledge also resides in the same mind that the qualifier 'mental' is used in this verse.

In verse (2.39), the Lord began by saying that He would teach the path (*yoga*) to obtain divine knowledge. However, in this verse, He is teaching the characteristics of a *yogi* who has already attained divine knowledge.

How can this be reconciled? Sri Rayaru [GV] states that for a seeker interested in traversing the path towards divine knowledge, it is important to learn about the characteristics of *yogis* who have already successfully traversed that path.

दुःखेष्वनुद्विग्नमनाः सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः ।
वीतरागभयक्रोधः स्थितधीर्मुनिरुच्यते ॥ ५६ ॥
duḥkheṣv anudvignamanāḥ sukheṣu vigataspṛhaḥ
vītarāgabhayakrodhaḥ sthitadhīr munir ucyate

One whose mind is not depressed by distress or elated by happiness and who is devoid of desires or anger or fear is known as steadfast in consciousness. (2.56)

Comments: In the next 3 verses, the Lord provides more details on the characteristics of a person with mental tranquility. In (2.55), worldly desire was mentioned as an example of a blemish. Here that concept is extended to include other blemishes such as obsession, fear, and anger.

यः सर्वत्रानभिस्नेहस्तत्तत् प्राप्य शुभाशुभम् ।
नाभिनन्दति न द्वेष्टि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥ ५७ ॥
yaḥ sarvatrā 'nabhisnehas tattatprāpya śubhāśubham
nā 'bhinandati na dveṣṭi tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā

One with deep conviction in divine, spiritual knowledge (*aparoksha jnani*) will not have attachment in all dealings and will neither rejoice over pleasure nor experience hatred during distress. (2.57)

Comments: The reason for this equanimity in both pleasure and discomfort in such a person is the lack of attachment to worldly issues.

The previous verse (2.56) identified the absence of anger as one of the characteristics of a person with mental tranquility and this verse indicates the absence of hatred during distress as another characteristic. Sri Jaya Teertha in his [PD] clarifies that there is no repetition here as the absence of hatred in (2.57) refers to all situations (due to the use of the word *sarvatrā*g) including those where there may be reasons for such hatred.

यदा संहरते चायं कूर्मोऽङ्गानीव सर्वशः ।
इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेभ्यस्तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ।। ५८।।
yadā saṁharate cā 'yaṁ kūrmo 'ṅgānī 'va sarvaśaḥ
indriyāṇī 'ndriyārthebhyas tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā

A person of steady wisdom can easily withdraw sense organs away from objects of senses just as a tortoise withdraws its limbs at will. (2.58)

Comments: A person with mental tranquility can control sense organs from indulging in objects of sensory pleasures such as sound, touch, form, taste, and smell. The image of the tortoise which withdraws its limbs at will is used to signify the ease with which such a person is able to control sense organs.

विषया विनिवर्तन्ते निराहारस्य देहिनः ।
रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते ।। ५९ ।।
viṣayā vinivartante nirāhārasya dehinaḥ
rasavarjaṁ raso 'py asya paraṁ dṛṣṭvā nivartate

By fasting, one can reduce the ability of one's body to consume and digest food, but not the cravings to indulge in tasty food. Those cravings can only be diminished by realizing the Lord Almighty. (2.59)

Comments: The next 3 verses are about sense control. By practicing self-discipline such as fasting, one experiences reduced power in the five sense organs of perception such as eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin. However, the craving experienced by the mind to indulge in sense pleasures does not diminish. This can only happen when one experiences a vision of Lord Almighty.

Sri Rayaru [GV] also provides an alternate meaning to this verse by interpreting the word '*rasa varjam*' to mean desires in objects of all sensory pleasures except taste. This means that by fasting one may experience loss of desire in the objects of sense pleasures such as sound, form, smell, and touch but not in the sense object of taste. This can only be overcome when one experiences a vision of Lord Almighty. This interpretation is also consistent with practical experience as when one ages and loses power and interest in seeing, listening, hearing etc., the desire to taste good food never goes away. In summary, a seeker should strive to achieve control over all sense organs and mind.

यततो ह्यपि कौन्तेय पुरुषस्य विपश्चितः ।
इन्द्रियाणि प्रमाथीनि हरन्ति प्रसभं मनः ॥ ६० ॥
yatato hy api kaunteya puruṣasya vipaścitaḥ
indriyāṇi pramāthīni haranti prasabhaṁ manaḥ

O Son of Kunti! It is the nature of sense organs to get attracted to sense pleasures. Despite many efforts, even learned ones will experience their sense organs swaying strongly. (2.60)

Comments: If one can understand that one needs to control one's sense organs from indulging in sense

pleasures (discipline in consumption - *pratyahara*) and focus one's minds on attaining spiritual knowledge, one may be able to conquer their sense organs. In that case why should one undertake difficult activities such as fasting - *nirahara* etc.? This verse answers this question by stating that sense organs are extremely strong and can exert control on the minds of even learned ones. It is the nature of sense organs to cause turbulence in one's mind. Hence, one must undertake difficult rituals such as fasting on special days etc., in addition to spiritual studies and try to overcome the influence of sense organs on one's mind.

The sense organs and the mind are inert objects. A question then arises as to how these inert objects can exert such control over each other. One must remember that the sense organs, while inert, are activated by the Lord resident in every soul based on the innate nature of that soul. So, it is the responsibility of the individual soul to try and control the activities of the sense organs.

तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत मत्परः ।
वशे हि यस्येन्द्रियाणि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ।। ६१।।

tāni sarvāṇi saṁyamya yukta āsīta matparaḥ
vaśe hi yasye indriyāṇi tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā

One should control one's sense organs from indulgence with a firm conviction on the supremacy of the Lord. Such a person will indeed attain divine knowledge, (2.61)

Comments: From previous discussions, it appears that one needs to control one's sense organs to attain divine, spiritual knowledge. However, it also appears that one needs to have possessed such divine, spiritual knowledge

to be permanently free from the control of sense organs. This appears to be a circular argument and hence is logically untenable (*anyonyashraya dosha*). How can this be reconciled? Sri Rayaru [GV] points to this verse for the answer. One must try and control one's sense organs while at the same time focus mind on the Supreme Lord. This will allow the mind to move towards concentrated meditation (*dhyana*) which allows one to undertake difficult sense control tasks such as strict fasting, and eventually conquer the sense organs. Such a person is now ready to absorb divine, spiritual knowledge paving the way for *m*oksha.

Sri Rayaru [GV] clarifies that for one to achieve divine, spiritual knowledge (*aparoksha jnana*), in addition to achieving full control over the sense organs, a seeker also needs to conquer emotions such as desire, hatred etc., as described later in verse (2.64).

Dangers in Sensual Indulgence

ध्यायतो विषयान् पुंसः सङ्गस्तेषूपजायते ।
सङ्गात् संजायते कामः कामात् क्रोधोऽभिजायते ॥ ६२॥
dhyāyato viṣayān puṁsaḥ saṅgas teṣū 'pajāyate
saṅgāt saṁjāyate kāmaḥ kāmāt krodho 'bhijāyate

क्रोधाद् भवति सम्मोहः संमोहात् स्मृतिविभ्रमः ।
स्मृतिभ्रंशाद् बुद्धिनाशो बुद्धिनाशाद् प्रणश्यति ॥ ६३॥
krodhād bhavati saṁmohaḥ saṁmohāt smṛtivibhramaḥ
smṛtibhraṁśād buddhināśo buddhināśāt praṇaśyati

One who keeps contemplating on sense pleasures develops attachment and obsession in them, which leads

to desire in experiencing such pleasures. This desire in turn leads to anger in the event of not being able to satisfy these desires. Anger leads to delusion and clouds one's mind about right and wrong. This delusion leads one to forget injunctions against forbidden activities. This forgetfulness in turn leads to failure in intellectual judgement. Loss of intellect results in one's downfall. (2.62) (2.63)

Comments: In verse (2.63), it was stated that one should focus one's mind on the Lord while striving to achieve self-control to conquer the sense organs. In verses (2.62), (2.63), (2.64), the Lord outlines the chain reaction that would ensue from loss of self-control and the emotional impact of attachment/aversion or likes/dislikes (*raga/dvesha)* leading to one's downfall (and eventual fall into hell). Understanding of this chain reaction will help one to develop equanimity in likes and dislikes.

The chain reaction is as follows: contemplation on sense pleasures -> obsession -> desire -> anger -> delusion -> forgetfulness -> loss of intellect -> destruction. Forgetfulness could be of two types. One would be forgetting knowledge about avoiding activities prohibited in the scriptures and the other would be to forget societal norms such as not usurping properties owned by others. As indicated in (2.56), one who has realized the Lord would have conquered these emotions, but a seeker on the spiritual path will have to strive to control these emotions, else he/she will experience the states indicated in the chain reaction. The primary cause for the chain reaction is because of an inability to manage *raga, dvesha*. This aspect is further explained in the next verse.

रागद्वेषवियुक्तैस्तु विषयानिन्द्रियैश्चरन् ।
आत्मवश्यैर्विधेयात्मा प्रसादमधिगच्छति ॥ ६४ ॥
rāgadveṣaviyuktais tu viṣayān indriyaiś caran
ātmavaśyair vidheyātmā prasādam adhigacchat

प्रसादे सर्वदुःखानां हानिरस्योपजायते ।
प्रसन्नचेतसो ह्याशु बुद्धिः पर्यवतिष्ठति ॥ ६५ ॥
prasāde sarvaduḥkhānāṁ hānir asyo 'pajāyate
prasannacetaso hy āśu buddhiḥ paryavatiṣṭhate

One, whose sense organs are under control and are not perturbed by the effects of likes/dislikes, attachment/ hatred, will partake in just enough sense indulgence for physical health and, through self-control will experience peace of mind. (2.64),

One whose mind is at peace will quickly absorb divine, spiritual knowledge (*aparoksha jnana*). Then, such a person will be rid of all miseries. This concept is well known through scriptures. (2.65)

Comments: These two verses indicate the benefits one would accrue by controlling the emotions of likes and dislikes. The benefits are – victory over sense organs and mental peace. In (2.61), it was indicated that one who has conquered sense organs will attain direct, divine (*aparoksha*) knowledge. However, sense control itself will not directly lead to attainment of divine knowledge. Sense control leads to mental peace allowing one to practice concentrated meditation. This leads to attaining direct, divine knowledge. So the immediate advantage of self-control is mental peace which eventually leads to direct, divine knowledge in a serial manner. It is also clarified

that one who has achieved control over sense organs can indulge in sense activities just enough to maintain physical wellbeing. In verse (2.59), it was indicated that one would need to undertake difficult tasks such as fasting to achieve self-control. Here it is clarified that one does not need to completely avoid consuming foods as one has to ensure physical wellbeing. It is possible to indulge in activities such as consuming minimum amount of required food while still exerting control over the sense organs.

In summary the sequence of events that would unfold from achieving self-control are as follows: Self-control (over sense organs)-> mental peace -> concentrated meditation -> divine knowledge -> elimination of sadness (due to evisceration of sins) -> liberation.

नास्ति बुद्धिरयुक्तस्य न चायुक्तस्य भावना ।
न चाभावयतः शांतिरशांतस्य कुतः सुखम् ।। ६६ ।।

nā 'sti buddhir ayuktasya na cā 'yuktasya bhāvanā
na cā 'bhāvayataḥ śāntir aśāntasya kutaḥ sukham

One who does not have control over the mind cannot absorb spiritual knowledge. Such a person also cannot meditate peacefully. How can one achieve liberation without meditation? How can one enjoy bliss without liberation? (2.66)

Comments: The next two verses describe the perils of not being able to control one's mind. If one can achieve divine, spiritual knowledge through scriptural studies and analysis, why would one need to control one's mind? This verse answers by stating that one who does not control the mind will not be able to practice concentrated meditation

without which one will not be able to absorb difficult concepts in the scriptures. Also, in this verse it is stated that one who does not achieve liberation (*moksha*) cannot enjoy bliss. One can question the reason for explicitly stating that eternal bliss can only be enjoyed by those in *moksha*. It must be noted that in (2.65), it was stated that when one is liberated, one will be rid of unhappiness. This verse clarifies that in *moksha* not only will one be rid of misery, but one will also enjoy pure bliss.

इन्द्रियाणां हि चरतां यन्मनोऽनुविधीयते ।
तदस्य हरति प्रज्ञां वायुर्नावमिवाम्भसि ॥ ६७ ॥
indriyāṇāṁ hi caratāṁ yan mano 'nuvidhīyate
tad asya harati prajñāṁ vāyur nāvam ivā 'mbhasi

The mind which follows sense organs that go after sense pleasures will be swayed just like a ship in an ocean gets swayed by strong winds. This leads to loss of intellectual judgement and also any knowledge derived through studies. (2.67)

Comments: This verse makes it very clear that even one who has learnt a lot through study of scriptures and contemplation of scriptural concepts will not be able to benefit from such knowledge if one is unable to control the mind and the sense organs. Mere acquisition of scriptural knowledge without exercising control over the senses and the mind amounts to just book knowledge. The mind is easily swayed. If sense organs pursue sense pleasures, the mind will follow them and will sway just like a boat in an ocean starts swaying and loses direction when faced with strong winds.

The example of a ship getting swayed by strong winds brings to memory an episode in the life of Sri Madhwacharya. Acharya was once meditating on the seashore near Udupi when he saw a ship caught in a violent storm. The people on the ship were crying for help. Acharya waved his holy fabric (*kavi shati*) towards the ship which immediately stabilized on the waters and came safely ashore. The travelers on the ship who were rescued by Acharya were very grateful and offered him his choice of any precious gems on board the ship, but Acharya was content with just a lump of sandstone (*gopi chandana*) that was used to tie the ship's mast. Inside the sandstone was a beautiful idol of Sri Krishna which was worshipped by Goddess Rukmini and Lord Brahma. Sri Madhwacharya carried that idol and installed it in Udupi where it can be seen even today! We can see the relevance of the example of a ship swaying on the ocean in this verse in light of this episode. Our body is like a ship that we are using to cross the ocean of *samsara*. Inside our body, Lord Krishna resides in our hearts just like the idol of Sri Krishna was inside the sandstone. Just as the travelers on the ship did not know the value of the sandstone piece which had the idol of Sri Krishna in it, we too do not appreciate the presence of the Lord in our hearts. Just as the travelers on the ship faced violent turbulence due to strong winds, we also feel great perturbance in our minds due to strong swaying of our sense organs. The travelers saw Sri Madhwacharya and cried for help. Acharya rescued them immediately. Similarly, if we turn to Sri Madhwacharya (an incarnation of Sri Vayudeva) asking for help in traversing this ocean of *samsara*, he will rescue us and land us safely in *moksha.*

तस्माद्यस्य महाबाहो निगृहीतानि सर्वशः ।
इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेभ्यस्तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ।। ६८।।
tasmād yasya mahābāho nigṛhītāni sarvaśaḥ
indriyāṇī 'ndriyārthebhyas tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā

O Mahabaho (Arjuna, the one with strong arms)! One who controls the sense organs from straying towards sense objects will attain deep conviction in divine, spiritual knowledge. (2.68)

Comments: In 4 verses, starting from verse (2.55) to (2.58), the Lord described the characteristics of a person with mental tranquility. In 9 verses from (2.59) to (2.67), questions about the nature of such a person were answered. This verse is a concluding summary of the above 9 verses. The sequence of stages for such a person to achieve divine, spiritual knowledge are sense-control -> peace of mind -> mental concentration -> spiritual study and contemplation -> conviction in knowledge -> concentrated meditation -> divine, spiritual knowledge.

Characteristics of a Realized Soul

या निशा सर्वभूतानां तस्यां जागर्ति संयमी ।
यस्यां जाग्रति भूतानि सा निशा पश्यतो मुनेः ।। ६९ ।।
yā niśā sarvabhūtānāṁ tasyāṁ jāgarti saṁyamī
yasyāṁ jāgrati bhūtāni sā niśā paśyato muneḥ

On the issue of spiritual knowledge where everyone is in the dark, a realized soul is wide awake (and aware) and on worldly issues on which everyone is wide awake (and fully engaged), the realized soul stays in the dark. (2.69)

Comments: In this verse the Lord is comparing the interests and knowledge of a normal worldly person and a realized person. Most people immersed in daily, worldly affairs are completely in the dark and have no interest in learning about the attributes of the Lord, whereas a realized soul is very much alert, awake, and aware of the attributes of the Lord. Conversely, while most people are focused on worldly matters, indulging in sense pleasure, a realized person stays in the dark (has no interest in such matters).

A realized soul is completely immersed in the Lord and has no interest at all in worldly matters. A question then arises about deities such as Indra, Surya, Agni etc., who are realized souls but have an active role in worldly matters as they activate the sense organs of living beings. If, as realized souls, they avoid taking interest in worldly matters, how can the world function? Sri Rayaru [GV] answers this question by stating that the nature of a realized soul referred to in this verse does not apply to deities. It applies to souls who have achieved self -realization but are not part of the group of deities who have specific roles.

आपूर्यमाणमचलप्रतिष्ठं

समुद्रमापः प्रविशन्ति यद्वत् ।

तद्वत् कामा यं प्रविशन्ति सर्वे

स शान्तिमाप्नोति न कामकामी ।। ७० ।।

āpūryamāṇam acalapratiṣṭhaṁ samudram āpaḥ praviśanti yadvat
tadvat kāmā yaṁ praviśanti sarve sa śāntim āpnoti na kāmakāmī

Just as an ocean does not rise with constant inflow of water and continues to take in rivers, one who is able to absorb worldly matters without getting attached is destined for liberation. One who is always focused on chasing desires can never achieve peace. (2.70)

Comments: It was stated in verse (2.69) that a realized person has no interest in worldly matters. However, there are instances of such people indulging in sense activities such as eating, hearing, seeing etc. This verse explains this apparent contradiction by clarifying that just as an ocean does not rise with the inflow of river waters, a realized person who indulges in sense activities purely to maintain physical wellbeing does not get attached to such consumption.

विहाय कामान् यः सर्वान् पुमांश्चरति निःस्पृहः ।
निर्ममो निरहंकारः स शान्तिमधिगच्छति ।। ७१ ।।

vihāya kāmān yaḥ sarvān pumāṁś carati niḥspṛhaḥ
nirmamo nirahañkāraḥ sa śāntim adhigacchhati

One who is rid of ego and arrogance and who performs worldly activities without desires will achieve peace and eternal bliss. (2.71)

Comments: In the previous verse, it was stated that a seeker must exercise sense control and partake in consumption activities only to maintain physical wellbeing. In this verse, it is further clarified that even when partaking in such consumption, one should do so with detachment and with firm conviction that one does not have any ownership or independence in action with regard to consumables and consumption.

एषा ब्राह्मी स्थितिः पार्थ नैनां प्राप्य विमुह्यति ।
स्थित्वाऽस्यामन्तकालेऽपि ब्रह्म निर्वाणमृच्छति ।। ७२ ।।
eṣā brāhmī sthitiḥ pārtha nai ’nāṁ prāpya vimuhyati
sthitvā ’syām antakāle ’pi brahmanirvāṇam ṛcchati

O Partha! This is the character of one who has deep conviction in divine, spiritual knowledge. Such a person will not experience misery in worldly matters and in due course will reach the Lord’s abode. (2.72)

Summary: In verses (2.55) to (2.69), the Lord explained the characteristics of a realized soul in response to Arjuna’s query in verse (2.54). This verse is a conclusion of that discussion. Sri Rayaru clarifies in [GV] that a realized soul will reach the Lord’s abode only after getting rid of the effects of good and bad deeds (*prarabdha karma*). Sri Rayaru further clarifies that the reference to Brahma here is related to the Lord (*Para Brahma*) and not to the four-faced deity Brahma, based on the use of the qualifier *nirvana* (meaning one without material body = Lord Almighty as *vana* = *bana* refers to material body).

Summary of Chapter 2

With the context for the teachings in the **Gita** established in Chapter 1, the actual sermon of Lord Krishna to Arjuna (and through Arjuna to the rest of humanity) begins in Chapter 2.

Seeing Arjuna in a pitiable condition not wanting to wage the war, Krishna asks Arjuna why he wants to avoid performing his prescribed duties and thereby risk losing respect in society. Such an abdication of responsibility is not worthy of a great prince like Arjuna who had a stellar

reputation for fighting for justice all his life (2.2-2.3). Arjuna, who so far wanted to avoid war out of compassion and attachment to his kith and kin, now reasons that Bheeshma, Drona and others are not mere family members and teachers whom he holds in very high esteem, they are also worthy of worship. However, Krishna's questioning opens some doubts in his mind and he informs Krishna that his mind is conflicted, and he is unsure about the path forward. He surrenders to Krishna, requests to be considered as a student and given guidance (2.4-2.8). Given that Arjuna's doubts are deep rooted, Lord Krishna proceeds to deliver a very detailed sermon to him covering all aspects of life such as the relationship between the Lord and individual souls, responsibilities of everyone in society, concept of devotion to the Lord, transient nature of life, cycle of births and deaths and many more topics which prove to be a summary of critical teachings from all scriptures such as the **Vedas** and great epics such as the **Ramayana**, the **Mahabharata** etc (2.11-2.71).

At this stage, one can expect several questions as to the context and content of the **Gita**. Firstly, why would Krishna get into great details about life, the universe, the relationship between the Lord and individual souls and such spiritual issues when all that was needed was some timely, practical advice to Arjuna to get on with fighting the war. The reason Krishna had to get into such great details is that Arjuna had developed deep rooted doubts about his duties and responsibilities, and he had to be convinced about the need to perform his duties without getting excessively attached to his near and dear ones. Secondly, one would wonder if the battlefield was the right venue for such heavy philosophical discourse which

should normally occur in a serene, quiet environment. Again, it is normal for many to seek guidance when they come to a crossroad and are about to implement actions with grave repercussions. These are the very times when one needs proper spiritual guidance. Some would question as to how such a lengthy sermon can be delivered when millions of soldiers are about the start a war. Krishna's conversation with Arjuna runs quickly as Arjuna is an evolved soul and absorbs the concepts very quickly. Finally, some wonder how Arjuna who is known as an incarnation of deity Indra could be ignorant and develop such fundamental doubts about his duties and responsibilities. At the end of Krishna's teachings, Arjuna responds saying that by Krishna's grace, his doubts have been cleared, his memory is back, and he is clear about his duties and responsibilities (18.73). The fact that his memory was back, implies that Arjuna had proper knowledge about his duties earlier but for some reason his mind was covered with delusion. It is clear that it was the Lord's Divine Will that Arjuna would undergo temporary loss of memory to set the stage for his doubts and questions which then gave Him an opportunity to use Arjuna as an instrument to teach the **Gita** to all of mankind.

Lord Krishna then advances many powerful reasons for Arjuna to stop worrying about the harm the war could cause to his loved ones. Firstly, his elders and teachers such as Bheeshma and Drona were not worthy of grieving for as they had supported Duryodhana, the evil king whose army had to be destroyed to establish order and righteousness. Despite their good nature, these elders were blind to Duryodhana's evil intentions and hence were not deserving of sympathy (2.11). Secondly, if Arjuna was

worried that these elders would be permanently destroyed, Krishna reminds him that the body and the soul are separate, and that their souls would live on, Further, based on the good deeds they had performed, they would achieve heaven. So, it was unnecessary to grieve over them (2.12). Thirdly, just as a body undergoes various stages in life such as childhood, youth, old age etc, death is also a natural stage for everybody. As such, these elders would die one day or the other, and no amount of grieving could prevent that (2.13). Fourthly, just as one does not grieve about throwing out old, worn out clothes as they are replaced by new, good clothes, one should not grieve over a worn out body that will eventually be replaced by a new one (2.22). Basically, Krishna teaches Arjuna that he must perform his rightful duties and any excuses coming in the way are untenable.

Verses (2.20) to (2.24) give us a description of the nature of individual souls which are indestructible, have no beginning or end etc. As opposed to individual souls, the nature of the Supreme Soul (Lord Almighty) is briefly described in verses (2.17), (2.25) and (2.29). The Lord pervades everywhere, is eternal, does not experience destruction of the body (as His body is transcendental), and is full of auspicious attributes and is devoid of any blemishes. He is superior to individual souls and hence is worthy of worship. One should perform one's prescribed duties as an offering to the Lord without expectations. This paves the way for one's liberation. Coming to the practical aspects of Arjuna's decision to relinquish arms, the Lord emphasizes the need for Arjuna to perform his prescribed duties as for a *kshatriya*, there is no loftier duty than waging a just war. Arjuna has been handed a

great opportunity to perform his duty and he should not waste this chance. If he were to withdraw from war, purely out of compassion to near and dear ones, nothing would prevent his enemies from concluding that Arjuna was afraid to fight, and they could question his valor. Finally, Krishna tells Arjuna that he has nothing to lose by waging the war. If he wins, he gets to rule the kingdom and eventually goes to heaven hereafter for diligently performing his duty. If he loses and dies, he would attain heavens for his conviction and efforts (2.31-2.37).

From verses (2.12) to (2.38), Krishna imparts Arjuna knowledge (*sankhya*) about the Lord and individual souls. From verse (2.39) onwards, He teaches Arjuna the methods and procedure (*yoga*) for acquiring such knowledge after which Arjuna would be able to perform his prescribed duties with conviction, realize the Lord, get over worldly bondage and achieve the state of eternal bliss (*moksha*). In verses (2.42 -2.45), the Lord teaches Arjuna the real purport of the **Vedas** - that one should focus on the deeper meanings and not get carried away by peripheral meanings. The real purport of the **Vedas** is divine, spiritual knowledge of Lord Almighty. In verses (2.45-2.51), the Lord discusses the concept of *nishkama karma*, that is performing prescribed duties without expectations. Specifically, in verse (2.50), the Lord categorically states that the best path for one to achieve divine, spiritual knowledge is for one to focus on performing one's assigned duties as an offering to the Lord without expectations on the outcome (*nishkama karma*). Such a realized soul would be rid of the consequences of good and bad deeds and would be eligible for liberation. Among all activities, those that lead to

attainment of divine knowledge is supreme. In verses (2.52) and (2.53), it is stated that in order to absorb proper teachings one needs to cleanse one's mind of conflicting, ignorant, and inconsistent viewpoints not based on scriptural truths. In verse (2.54) Arjuna asks Krishna about the characteristics of a person with such a tranquil mind. In 4 verses, starting from verse (2.55) to (2.58), the Lord describes the characteristics of a person with mental tranquility. In 9 verses from (2.59) to (2.67), questions about the nature of such a person are answered. The Lord concludes the sermon in Chapter 2 by stating in (2.72) that such a person will not experience worldly miseries and in due course will reach His abode.

।। इति द्वितीयोऽध्यायः ।।

End of Chapter 2

तृतीयोऽध्यायः – कर्मयोगः
Chapter 3 – The Path of Action

Chapter Introduction: This Chapter of 43 verses is termed *Karma Yoga* (The Path of Action). In this chapter, the Lord answers Arjuna's questions regarding the paths of duty (*karma*) and knowledge (*jnana*). Arjuna wonders if there was a way, he could focus on acquiring knowledge (*jnana*) and avoid participating in the war. The Lord answers all Arjuna's doubts logically to convince him that everyone has an obligation to perform their duties to society, and as a *kshatriya* prince it was Arjuna's responsibility to fight the just war to protect his citizens. To perform one's duty, one also needs to be equipped with knowledge and in that sense, one needs to incorporate both *karma* and *jnana* in one's spiritual journey. Based on one's innate nature, some may be prescribed a path that is dominant in action and others may be prescribed a path dominant in knowledge. This chapter also has an excellent discussion on the Cyclic Order of the Universe. In the previous chapter, in verses (2.12) to (2.30), the Lord lectured on the nature of individual souls and the Supreme Soul (Lord Almighty). In verse (2.39), the Lord tells Arjuna how to acquire spiritual knowledge which would guide one to perform right actions. In verses (2.45) to (2.51), the Lord discusses the concept of *nishkama karma* (performing prescribed duties without expectations) which would liberate one from bondage. In this chapter, that concept is expanded in response to Arjuna's questions that appear in verses (3.1) and (3.2). Thus, chapter 3 is an appropriate follow up to chapter 2.

Which is Better – Action or Knowledge?

अर्जुन उवाच ।
ज्यायसी चेत् कर्मणस्ते मता बुद्धिर्जनार्दन ।
तत् किं कर्मणि घोरे मां नियोजयसि केशव ॥ १ ॥
arjuna uvāca
jyāyasī cet karmaṇas te matā buddhir janārdana
tat kiṁ karmaṇi ghore māṁ niyojayasi keśava

व्यामिश्रेणैव वाक्येन बुद्धिं मोहयसीव मे ।
तदेकं वद निश्चित्य येन श्रेयोऽहमाप्नुयाम् ॥ २ ॥
vyāmiśreṇeva vākyena buddhiṁ mohayasīva me
tad ekaṁ vada niścitya yena śreyoham āpnuyām

Arjuna said:

O Janardana! O Keshava! If you opine that knowledge is superior to action, then why are you pushing me to wage this dreadful war? (3.1)

My mind is confused with this dual talk of superiority between knowledge and action. Please tell me with certainty the correct way which will lead me to the right path. (3.2)

Comments: Sri Rayaru in [GV] makes a reference to verse (2.49) which spoke about the supremacy of the path of knowledge over the path of action. However, in other verses such as (2.37), Krishna exhorts Arjuna to follow the path of action by waging the just war as that was Arjuna's prescribed duty. Arjuna, is now questioning as to which is the superior path. He wonders whether he should renounce everything, become an ascetic and follow the path of knowledge which would lead him to liberation.

Jnana Yogis and Karma Yogis

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
लोकेऽस्मिन् द्विविधा निष्ठा पुरा प्रोक्ता मयाऽनघ ।
ज्ञानयोगेन सांख्यानां कर्मयोगेन योगिनाम् ॥ ३ ॥

śrībhagavān uvāca
lokesmin dvividhā niṣṭhā purā proktā mayānagha
jñānayogena sāṅkhyānāṁ karmayogena yogināṁ

The Lord said:

O Anagha (Arjuna, the one without sins)! As explained before, in this world there are two paths towards liberation, depending on one's innate nature, talent, and situation. Kings such as Janaka (*karma yogi*) achieve liberation by sincerely ruling their kingdoms (path of action), and sages such as Sanaka (*jnana yogi*) achieve liberation by learning, teaching, and spreading spiritual knowledge to others (path of knowledge). (3.3)

Comments: Lord Krishna clarifies that there are two main paths to liberation based on one's innate nature, ability, and eligibility. Arjuna, as a ruler, belongs to the class of *karma yogi* and hence he should perform his prescribed duty of waging this war to protect his citizens. This answers Arjuna's question in (3.1). It is further clarified in [GV] that everyone must follow both the path of knowledge and the path of action. However, in *jnana yogis*, knowledge is predominant and hence they should follow the path of knowledge and in the process also follow necessary activities (path of action). Likewise, for *karma yogis* such as Arjuna, the path of action (war, in this case) is the superior path and traversing that path also

requires a certain amount of knowledge (path of knowledge). As such, *karma yoga* and *jnana yoga* refer to the aspect of action or knowledge that is predominant in a person's nature. This also means that everyone of us should introspect within ourselves as to the proper path for us to follow, depending on our innate nature, talent, interest, and ability. For one who sincerely prays to the Lord, the path will become clear.

Action (Karma) is Mandatory for Everyone

न कर्मणामनारम्भान्नैष्कर्म्यं पुरुषोऽश्नुते ।
न च संन्यसनादेव सिद्धिं समधिगच्छति ॥ ४ ॥

na karmaṇām anārambhān naiṣkarmyaṁ puruṣośnute
na ca saṁnyasanād eva siddhiṁ samadhigacchati

One cannot escape bondage from actions just by relinquishing actions. Also, one cannot directly achieve liberation only by performing duties without expectations (*nishkama karma*). (3.4)

Comments: Krishna instructs Arjuna not to avoid performing prescribed duties. There are three reasons that Arjuna could have for avoiding duties: (a) Once liberated (in *moksha*), there are no compulsions on duties, so in preparation it may be best to avoid actions (and focus on knowledge) in this world itself; (b) focus on activities might bind one in worldly life and lead to expectations; and, (c) some scriptures say that action comes in the way of attaining *moksha,* based on the phrase – '*karmana badhyate jantuhu'* (one gets bound by activity – in other words, actions come in the way of liberation).

Lord Krishna responds to the reasoning in (a) by using the word *purusha* in this verse which stands for one with a physical body (gross or subtle). The physical body is designed for performing actions. Hence, the existence of the body contradicts the reasoning in (a). The use of the word *purusha* also implies that one would have gone through many births. Just because one decides not to perform any actions in this birth, it does not mean that one would not have performed activities in prior births. So, does it mean that one can never achieve liberation? This argument makes the reasoning in (b) untenable. Actions performed with expectations on outcomes do come in the way of *moksha.* This does not apply to all actions, especially actions performed without expectations. Hence, reasoning in (c) is also invalid. Even *nishkama karma* does not, by itself directly lead to *moksha*. This type of action leads to purity in mind which allows one to absorb spiritual studies, eventually paving the way for liberation.

So, the path to liberation is to avoid activities with expectations and perform prescribed activities -> mental peace -> detachment from worldly objects -> concentrated listening, reflection, meditation on the Lord Almighty -> divine knowledge -> liberation. The process involved in these steps are clarified in the following verses.

न हि कश्चित् क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत् ।
कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः ॥ ५ ॥

na hi kaścit kṣaṇam api jātu tiṣṭhaty akarmakṛt
kāryate hy avaśaḥ karma sarvaḥ prakṛtijair guṇaiḥ

One cannot survive for a single second without performing any action. Under the influence of the Lord, everyone is always performing some action or the other due to interaction with material nature. (3.5)

Comments: This verse further clarifies the real meaning of the scriptural phrase '*karmana badhyate jantuhu'* (one gets bound by activity – in other words, activity comes in the way of liberation). Some may use this phrase to avoid doing any activity. The Lord clarifies that it is impossible for any living being to survive without activity. Even breathing is an activity. Even realized souls, as long as they are alive, will keep performing activities as ordained by the independent Lord Almighty, based on interaction with material nature.

कर्मेन्द्रियाणि संयम्य य आस्ते मनसा स्मरन् ।
इन्द्रियार्थान् विमूढात्मा मिथ्याचारः स उच्यते ॥ ६ ॥

karmendriyāṇi saṁyamya ya āste manasā smaran
indriyārthān vimūḍhātmā mithyācāraḥ sa ucyate

यस्त्विन्द्रियाणि मनसा नियम्याऽरभतेऽर्जुन ।
कर्मेन्द्रियैः कर्मयोगम् असक्तः स विशिष्यते ॥ ७ ॥

yas tv indriyāṇi manasā niyamyārabhaterjuna
karmaindriyaiḥ karmayogam asaktaḥ sa viśiṣyate

One who controls actions of sense organs in pursuing sense objects, but still craves mentally for these objects is an ignorant hypocrite. (3.6)

O Arjuna! The better path for one is to perform prescribed duties using the sense organs of action (hands etc.), while controlling the sense organs of perception (eyes, ears etc.) through the mind. (3.7)

Comments: One can understand that one must perform some activities for the sake of physical well-being, and it is impossible to avoid all activities. But why not avoid other activities such as performing rituals etc.? The Lord answers this question by stating that one must perform prescribed activities such as performing rituals. This is elaborated in later verses. The point being made is that mere performing of activities will not bind someone and come in the way of liberation. It is the mental condition with which one performs action that would bind someone.

नियतं कुरु कर्म त्वं कर्म ज्यायो ह्यकर्मणः ।
शरीरयात्राऽपि च ते न प्रसिद्ध्येदकर्मणः ॥ ८ ॥
niyataṁ kuru karma tvaṁ karma jyāyo hy akarmaṇaḥ
śarīrayātrāpi ca te na prasiddhyed akarmaṇaḥ

You should perform your duties prescribed by society based on your innate nature and talent. Acting on your duties is far superior to relinquishing duties. One cannot traverse the journey of life without performing prescribed duties. (3.8)

Comments: If it is the mind that comes in the way of one's attaining liberation, and duty is also mandatory, what type of duty should one perform? The answer is – one must perform duties prescribed to one's profession based on one's innate nature, talent, and training. After all one must perform duties for livelihood in a society.

यज्ञार्थात् कर्मणोऽन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः ।
तदर्थं कर्म कौन्तेय मुक्तसङ्गः समाचर ॥ ९ ॥
yajñārthāt karmaṇonyatra lokoyaṁ karmabandhanaḥ
tadarthaṁ karma kaunteya muktasaṅgaḥ samācara

O Son of Kunti! Only that action that is not performed as an offering to the Lord will bind one. Perform your duties as an offering to the Lord and it will liberate you. (3.9).

Comments: This verse provides more clarifications on spiritual texts that outwardly seem to indicate that activities will bind and come in the way of liberation. Building on the argument in verse (3.8) that one has to keep performing some activity or the other at least to sustain life, this verse states that the spiritual text quoted in the comments section of (3.5) refers only to those activities that are not performed as an offering to Lord Almighty. The word *yagna* used here refers to Lord Vishnu, as the root word *gna* means knowledge, and Lord Vishnu is omniscient (all knowing). Activities that are performed as an offering to the Lord will not bind anyone and in fact, will lead one to liberation.

Cyclic Order of the Universe

सहयज्ञाः प्रजाः सृष्ट्वा पुरोवाच प्रजापतिः ।
अनेन प्रसविष्यध्वम् एष वोऽस्त्विष्टकामधुक् ॥ १० ॥
sahayajñāḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā purovāca prajāpatiḥ
anena prasaviṣyadhvam eṣa vostv iṣṭakāmadhuk

At the time of creation, Prajapati Brahma created the human race and also the sacrificial methods for propitiating deities controlling nature. He addressed the people thus - by performing these sacrifices you will achieve your desires and these deities will fulfil your desires. (3.10)

Comments: In four verses from (3.10) to (3.13), the Lord describes the concept of *yagna* (ritual sacrifice) that

came into existence at the time of creation of the human race. Every aspect of this universe including the elements of nature, the parts of a human body etc., are activated by deities who have been given that power by the Lord Almighty. One must perform ritual sacrifices to propitiate the deities, who when pleased will fulfill the desires of the citizenry. The concept of *arthavada* is utilized here to convey the importance of performing *yagna*. *Arthavada* is a logical construct that simultaneously uses praise (*stuti*) and admonition (*ninda*) in conveying a concept. Those who perform the prescribed rituals earn the grace of the deities and those who consume riches without sharing them are admonished.

देवान् भावयतानेन ते देवा भावयन्तु वः ।
परस्परं भावयन्तः श्रेयः परमवाप्स्यथ ॥ ११ ॥
devān bhāvayatānena te devā bhāvayantu vaḥ
parasparaṁ bhāvayantaḥ śreyaḥ param avāpsyatha

You should continue to worship deities who are the controlling entities for the forces of nature and when pleased with your sacrifices, they will bestow blessings on you. You will prosper from this mutual affection. (3.11)

Comments: This verse indicates the mutual admiration between the deities who are pleased by ritual sacrifices and the citizenry that performs these sacrifices.

इष्टान् भोगान् हि वो देवा दास्यन्ते यज्ञभाविताः ।
तैर्दत्तानप्रदायैभ्यो यो भुंक्ते स्तेन एव सः ॥ १२ ॥
iṣṭān bhogān hi vo devā dāsyante yajñabhāvitāḥ
tair dattān apradāyaibhyo yo bhuṅkte stena eva saḥ

Deities pleased with your propitiation will fulfil your desires. One who selfishly consumes such fruits earned, without donating back, is indeed a thief. (3.12)

Comments: Those who selfishly consume everything earned from ritual sacrifices without sharing them are admonished as being equivalent to thieves. This strongly worded verse is meant to encourage one to adopt the concept of sharing, which is a foundational pillar of every civilized society.

यज्ञशिष्टाशिनः सन्तो मुच्यन्ते सर्वकिल्बिषैः ।
भुञ्जते ते त्वघं पापा ये पचन्त्यात्मकारणात् ।। १३।।
yajñaśiṣṭāśinaḥ santo mucyante sarvakilbiṣaiḥ
bhuñjate te tv aghaṁ pāpā ye pacanty ātmakāraṇāt

Those, who perform sacrifices to propitiate the deities using riches bestowed on them by the deities and consume only what is left, will be rid of bondage. Those who selfishly consume everything themselves will accumulate sins. (3.13)

Comments: Those who use the riches gained through ritual sacrifices to perform activities as an offering to the Lord Almighty, will not only please the deities but will also move towards liberation. Excessive, selfish consumption of riches earned without giving back to society leads to one's downfall.

अन्नाद् भवन्ति भूतानि पर्जन्यादन्नसम्भवः ।
यज्ञाद् भवति पर्जन्यो यज्ञः कर्मसमुद्भवः ।। १४ ।।
annād bhavanti bhūtāni parjanyād annasaṁbhavaḥ
yajñād bhavati parjanyo yajñaḥ karmasamudbhavaḥ

कर्म ब्रह्मोद्भवं विद्धि ब्रह्माक्षरसमुद्भवम् ।
तस्मात् सर्वगतं ब्रह्म नित्यं यज्ञे प्रतिष्ठितम् ।। १५ ।।
karma brahmodbhavaṁ viddhi brahmākṣarasamudbhavam
tasmāt sarvagataṁ brahma nityaṁ yajñe pratiṣṭhitam

Living entities come into being through the food chain (rice). Rice grows because of rain and Sun. Vedic sacrifices (to propitiate deities) result in timely rains. The Lord Almighty is responsible for all activities. The Lord manifests from Vedic hymns and Vedic sacrifices performed by humans. (3.14) (3.15)

Comments: These 2 verses describe the Cyclic Order of the Universe to convey the importance of *yagna* (Vedic sacrifices) that one needs to perform. This cyclic order ensures orderly functioning of the universe and if broken, will result in chaos and anarchy due to the imbalances. Living beings come into physical existence through the food chain, which is represented by rice. Rain (governed by the deity Parjanya – Sun) causes rice to grow. Parjanya, when pleased by the *yagna* performed by the citizenry causes rain. Human beings invoke the Lord Almighty through Vedic hymns (as the Lord is known through the **Vedas**) and the Lord powers humans to perform their prescribed duties (*karma*) and propitiate the deities through *yagna*. This cycle is represented as follows: Rice -> Humans -> Vedic Prayers - > Lord's Grace -> Prescribed duties -> Ritual sacrifices -> Offering to Deities (Parjanya) -> Rain -> Rice.

Yagna, the concept of offering to deities through ritual sacrifices is an especially important aspect of Hindu philosophy and its meaning is described in later verses.

एवं प्रवर्तितं चक्रं नानुवर्तयतीह यः ।
अघायुरिन्द्रियारामो मोघं पार्थ स जीवति ।। १६ ।।
evaṁ pravartitaṁ cakraṁ nānuvartayatīha yaḥ
aghāyur indriyārāmo moghaṁ pārtha sa jīvati

One who does not respect and follow this cycle of life is leading a wasteful life. Such people are interested only in pursuing sense pleasures and they lead a sinful life. (3.16)

Comments: The Lord teaches that everyone must play their roles in the circle of life to ensure proper functioning of the cyclic order of the universe. This order is an interaction amongst its constituencies namely, the individual souls, inert matter (material nature) and the Lord Almighty. Even from practical experience we all know that there is a specific order in nature that one must follow. We witness every day the perils of deviating from this order in terms of global warming, excessive rains, floods, earthquakes, pandemics etc. the **Gita** teaches that everyone must understand their role in the universe and not waste their lifetimes by senselessly pursuing sense pleasures constantly. Some can point out to the instances where even after performing the stipulated *yagna*, one does not see the effects such as rains, sumptuous harvest etc., and question of the validity of these claims. One must note that mechanically performing these rituals will not yield results and they must be accompanied with sincerity in purpose and most importantly, as an offering to the Supreme Lord.

At this stage, one may ask a question as to the applicability of these rituals to the population other than

householders, such as students (*brahmachari*), those who have retired from active life (*vanprasthi*) and ascetics (*sanyasis*). After all, not everyone would have access to all material utilities that would be required to perform these rituals. Sri Rayaru [GV] clarifies that *yagna* has different meanings based on one's stage in life. For example, for *brahmcharis*, serving their teachers (*guru*) is the stipulated *yagna*. For ascetics who have renounced all material utilities, *yagna* refers to mental (*manasika*) and vocal (*vachaka)* sacrifices. Studying, teaching, and lecturing about the scriptures is the stipulated *yagna* for ascetics. For *vanaprasthis*, performing activities without hurting any living organism constitutes *yagna*. In other words, *yagna* is mandatory for everyone, but the stipulated activity depends on one's stage in life. Sri Vidyasagara Madhava Teertha indicated the example of some saints who, in addition to *jnana yagna* (sacrifice through knowledge), *dhyana yagna* (sacrifice through meditation), etc., practice the *yagna* of writing poetry on the greatness of the Lord Almighty. For them, poetry (*kavana*) and singing in praise of the Lord is *savana* (*yagna*).

Actions Do Not Bind One Focused on the Lord

यस्त्वात्मरतिरेव स्यादात्मतृप्तश्च मानवः ।
आत्मन्येव च संतुष्टस्तस्य कार्यं न विद्यते ।। १७ ।।

yas tv ātmaratir eva syād ātmatṛptaś ca mānavaḥ
ātmany eva ca santuṣṭas tasya kāryaṁ na vidyate

One who is elated by visualizing the Lord, who is contented in pleasing the Lord, who is happily immersed in the Lord has indeed achieved the state of ultimate consciousness. There is no prescribed duty or responsibility for such a being. (3.17)

Comments: In verses (3.4), (3.10) etc., the requirements for performing one's stipulated duties were described. Previously, it was pointed out that ascetics perform mental and vocal *yagna* by way of studying, teaching, and lecturing as everyone must perform their assigned duties. A question that then arises is about the case of those who while meditating would have reached a state of ultimate consciousness (*asamprajnata samadhi*). In this state they would not even be aware of their surroundings and they would be fully immersed in the Lord. This verse states that one who is completely immersed in the Lord and has reached the state of ultimate consciousness will by God's grace be fully contented and has no obligations to perform any activities. Such a person will not have interest in any matter other than the Lord.

नैव तस्य कृतेनार्थो नाकृतेनेह कश्चन ।
न चास्य सर्वभूतेषु कश्चिदर्थव्यपाश्रयः ॥ १८ ॥
naiva tasya kṛtenārtho nākṛteneha kaścana
na cāsya sarvabhūteṣu kaścid arthavyapāśrayaḥ

There is nothing to be gained by such a person by performing duties and nothing will be lost by non-performance of duties. Such a person has no need to depend on elders, teachers for any benefit (as that person has realized the Lord). (3.18)

Comments: Everyone has an obligation to perform prescribed duties many of which must be performed at specified times. Is it necessary for one to wake up a person who is in the state of ultimate consciousness to allow that person to perform prescribed duties at specified times? Sri Rayaru in [GV] answers by stating that, as per this

verse, such a person has no such obligations. Further, that person does not have to wake up from the state of deep meditation and ultimate consciousness even to greet elders, teachers etc., as no further benefits will be derived. Such a person has already realized the Lord and hence has no obligation to perform duties.

तस्मादसक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचर ।
असक्तो ह्याचरन् कर्म परमाप्नोति पूरुषः ।। १९ ।।

tasmād asaktaḥ satataṁ kāryaṁ karma samācara
asakto hy ācaran karma param āpnoti pūruṣaḥ

Only those who have realized the Lord are exempt from obligation to perform duties. But you must perform your prescribed duties without getting attached to the outcome. One who focusses on performing duties without expecting results is sure to reach the Lord's abode. (3.19)

Comments: Those who have reached the state of ultimate consciousness, have realized the Lord and those who are already liberated have no obligations to perform any duties. But Arjuna must perform his prescribed duty to enable him to move towards the Lord's abode.

Arjuna Must Perform His Duties and Fight the Just War

कर्मणैव हि संसिद्धिम् आस्थिता जनकादयः ।
लोकसंग्रहमेवापि संपश्यन् कर्तुमर्हसि ।। २० ।।

karmaṇaiva hi saṁsiddhim āsthitā janakādayaḥ
lokasaṁgraham evāpi saṁpaśyan kartum arhasi

Wise emperors such as Janaka achieved salvation through their honest discharge of prescribed duties. You

(Arjuna) should perform your duties for the sake of society. (3.20)

Comments: Wise emperors such as Janaka have already achieved divine, spiritual knowledge and are destined to reach the Lord's abode. If so, why did they continue to perform duties? This verse answers by stating that even such people would experience deeper levels of bliss in *moksha* on account of additional duties performed. In addition, they performed duties to set an example to the masses. Likewise, Arjuna needs to focus on duties as he is considered a role model to his citizens. While attaining *nirvana* requires one to acquire divine, spiritual knowledge, such knowledge accrues only when someone performs prescribed duties without expectations. In that sense the relationship between duty and knowledge is like the one between a yoke and the shoulders of a person using that yoke to till the land. The yoke is an implement, but the actual effort is from the person's shoulders.

यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः ।
स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते ।। २१ ।।

yadyad ācarati śreṣṭhas tattad evetaro janaḥ
sa yat pramāṇaṁ kurute lokas tad anuvartate

Whatever actions are performed by superiors in a society, the rest of the population will emulate. Superiors' actions will become the rule which others will follow. (3.21)

Comments: The previous verse stated that leaders in a society need to perform activities to guide the masses. This verse further clarifies that concept. While societies may have written rules and regulations for their citizenry,

the fine conduct of their leaders provides live examples of actions which the masses can emulate.

The Lord Acts but Has No Obligations to Do So

न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किञ्चन ।
नानवाप्तमवाप्तव्यं वर्त एव च कर्मणि ॥ २२ ॥
na me pārthāsti kartavyaṁ triṣu lokeṣu kiṁcana
nānavāptam avāptavyaṁ varta eva ca karmaṇi

यदि ह्यहं न वर्तेयं जातु कर्मण्यतन्द्रितः ।
मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः ॥ २३ ॥
yadi hy ahaṁ na varteyaṁ jātu karmaṇy atandritaḥ
mama vartmānuvartante manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ

उत्सीदेयुरिमे लोका न कुर्यां कर्म चेदहम् ।
संकरस्य च कर्ता स्याम् उपहन्यामिमाः प्रजाः ॥ २४ ॥
utsīdeyur ime lokā na kuryāṁ karma ced aham
saṁkarasya ca kartā syām upahanyām imāḥ prajāḥ

O Partha! There is no prescribed duty for Me in these three worlds. There is nothing I do not own and nothing that I need to own. Even then I engage in activities (to set an example for others). (3.22)

O Partha! If I ever stop energetically engaging in activities, everyone is certain to follow My way. (3.23)

If I ever stop My activities, everyone will lose their way and end up in misery. The resulting anarchy will lead to the growth of an unholy society and I will be held responsible for it. (3.24)

Comments: These verses answer the question that one may have as to whether the Lord has any obligation to perform any activities. The Lord states that He has no such obligation as He is the absolute owner of all the worlds and has no needs. Even then, He performs activities out of compassion to set an example for everyone. The Lord activates everyone's activities but He is not impacted by activities of others; like a catalytic agent that causes changes in other objects but itself does not undergo changes. If the Lord stops performing activities, there is a danger that everyone in society, devoid of examples, may also stop performing their prescribed activities, interrupting the cycle of the universe, resulting in societal dysfunction.

The Learned Perform Duties without Expectations

सक्ताः कर्मण्यविद्वांसो यथा कुर्वन्ति भारत ।
कुर्याद् विद्वांस्तथाऽसक्तश्चिकीर्षुर्लोकसंग्रहम् ।। २५ ।।
saktāḥ karmaṇy avidvāṁso yathā kurvanti bhārata
kuryād vidvāṁs tathāsaktaś cikīrṣur lokasaṁgraham

O Bharata! Just as ignorant people perform duties with expectations, truly knowledgeable people perform their duties without any expectations from larger society. (3.25)

Comments: If it is mandatory for ignorant persons also to perform prescribed duties, what then is the difference between ignorant and wise ones when they perform their duties? This verse answers by stating that wise ones perform activities without any expectations to set an example for society at large.

न बुद्धिभेदं जनयेदज्ञानां कर्मसङ्गिनाम् ।
जोषयेत् सर्वकर्माणि विद्वान् युक्तः समाचरन् ।। २६ ।।
na buddhibhedaṁ janayed ajñānāṁ karmasaṁginām
joṣayet sarvakarmāṇi vidvān yuktaḥ samācaran

Let not the wise unsettle the minds of ignorant ones attached to actions performed without proper knowledge. Learned ones should conduct their activities with their minds focused on the Lord and inspire ignorant people through their action. (3.26)

Comments: This verse describes how a wise one should act as a role model to ignorant ones in performing duties. Many times, mere preaching about the need for performing prescribed duties without expectations will not convince ignorant ones who are focused on activities for material gains. Wise ones should instead demonstrate the proper way of performing prescribed duties through action as an offering to the Lord and not through mere words. Through their actions, they should motivate and encourage the ignorant to perform right deeds.

प्रकृतेः क्रियमाणानि गुणैः कर्माणि सर्वशः ।
अहंकारविमूढात्मा कर्ताऽहमिति मन्यते ।। २७ ।।
prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ
ahaṁkāravimūḍhātmā kartāham iti manyate

Ignorant ones, unaware that the Lord Almighty activates everyone's actions based on their inherent nature and under the influence of material nature, wrongly conclude that they perform actions on their own. (3.27)

Comments: This verse provides further explanations on verses (3.25) and (3.26). Sri Rayaru in [GV] provides an excellent explanation on the inner meanings of the terms *prakriti* and *guna* appearing in this verse which carry 3 sets of meanings. Firstly, *prakriti* and *guna* refer to the Lord Almighty and His 3 attributes, namely, will, knowledge, and attempt. Secondly, the terms *prakriti* and *guna* refer to the three types of individual souls (superior, ordinary, and inferior) and their 3 attributes of knowledge, namely, correct knowledge, mixed knowledge, and false knowledge. Thirdly, the terms *prakriti* and *guna*, refer to inert nature and its 3 attributes, namely *sat* (piety), *rajas* (passion) and *tamas* (ignorance). With these interpretations, this verse can be expanded to mean as follows- Lord Almighty is independent and is the instrumental cause for activities performed by everyone based on their innate attributes using inert nature as the material cause and their sense organs as the instruments. The attributes of inert nature impact the actions performed by the sense organs. Ignorant ones think that they are performing the actions on their own using their sense organs of action.

तत्त्ववित्तु महाबाहो गुणकर्मविभागयोः ।
गुणा गुणेषु वर्तन्त इति मत्वा न सज्जते ॥ २८ ॥

tattvavit tu mahābāho guṇakarmavibhāgayoḥ
guṇā guṇeṣu vartanta iti matvā na sajjate

O Arjuna, One with strong arms! Learned ones, aware of the distinction in the attributes and activities between the Lord and ordinary souls, know that their sense organs perform their activities as willed by the Lord. Such people will not get entangled in worldly life. (3.28)

Comments: The previous verse stated that ignorant ones believe that they act independently, and this verse describes the views of learned ones. The learned ones are aware that the Lord Almighty is independent and causes activity in individual souls based on their innate nature. They have a good understanding of the divisions among attributes (*guna*) and action (*karma*). Attributes here have different meanings depending on the entity. The attributes of the Lord are will, knowledge, and attempt. For the individual souls they are the innate nature of being superior, ordinary, and inferior. The attributes of inert nature are *sat*(piety), *rajas*(passion), and *tamas*(ignorance). Likewise, the actions of the 3 entities are also different. The Lord is independent, individual souls which are dependent on the Lord act according to their innate nature, and inert nature which is also dependent on the Lord undergoes transformation based on its 3 attributes of *sat*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Sri Rayaru in [GV] provides two equally meaningful interpretations for the first half of the second line (*guna guneshu vartanta*). First interpretation – The Lord's attributes (*guna*) initiate actions (*guneshu)* in individual souls based on their innate nature. The second interpretation – Individual soul's sense organs (*guna*) act on sense objects (*guneshu*) based on the Lord's will and the individual's innate nature. In summary, learned ones understand that they are not independent and with proper conviction they avoid getting entangled in worldly activities as they are focused on the Lord Almighty.

प्रकृतेर्गुणसम्मूढाः सज्जन्ते गुणकर्मसु ।
तानकृत्स्नविदो मन्दान् कृत्स्नविन्न विचालयेत् ।। २९।।

prakṛter guṇasaṁmūḍhāḥ sajjante guṇakarmasu
tān akṛtsnavido mandān kṛtsnavin na vicālayet

Ignorant ones, unaware of the distinction in attributes and activities between the Lord and ordinary souls, get entangled in worldly pleasures and develop addiction. Learned ones who have proper spiritual knowledge need not waste time teaching them. (3.29)

Comments: Should the learned advise ignorant ones? This verse answers by stating that ignorant ones who are in constant pursuit of sense pleasures would have developed an addiction and learned ones need not waste their time on teaching them. Souls have innate natures and those who are naturally inclined to be ignorant can never be transformed. For example, nature includes cruel animals such as scorpions, snakes, tigers etc. It is in their nature to be cruel. One cannot transform them. The natural ecology of the universe requires different species to exist and not all species have the same attributes. The Lord does not interfere with the innate nature of souls but allows them to exist and act based on their attributes.

मयि सर्वाणि कर्माणि संन्यस्याध्यात्मचेतसा ।
निराशीर्निर्ममो भूत्वा युध्यस्व विगतज्वरः ॥ ३० ॥

mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi saṁnyasyādhyātmacetasā
nirāśīr nirmamo bhūtvā yudhyasva vigatajvaraḥ

Submit all your activities to Me without ego and without expectations on the outcome while focusing your mind on Me. Get rid of your fear of losing near and dear ones and fight this just war. (3.30)

Comments: After discussing the ways that learned ones and ignorant ones perform their duties, and differences in their approaches, the Lord summarizes this topic by

exhorting Arjuna to perform his prescribed duty of waging the war as an offering to Him. He is to do this without any expectations and without ego, knowing fully well that it is the Lord who is powering him in his efforts. Sri Rayaru in [GV] explains that the word *adhyatma* can be derived in two ways – *atmanam adhikrutya sthitam* and *adhikam chaasow atma*, and both mean Supreme Lord. Also, as per **Brahma Tarka**, every activity must be performed as a worship (or an offering) to the Lord Almighty.

This verse is indicated as the summary of the entire chapter 3 by Sri Madinur Vishnu Teertha Swamiji [BGS]. Given that the backdrop for the **Gita** is Arjuna's refusal to fight the war, in this verse the Lord conclusively directs Arjuna to wage the just war as an offering to Him without ego or any expectations of the outcome (*karma yoga*). Hence, this verse is aptly a summary of chapter 3.

ये मे मतमिदं नित्यमनुतिष्ठन्ति मानवाः ।
श्रद्धावन्तोऽनसूयन्तो मुच्यन्ते तेऽपि कर्मभिः ।। ३१।।
ye me matam idaṁ nityam anutiṣṭhanti mānavāḥ
śraddhāvantonasūyanto mucyante tepi karmabhiḥ

ये त्वेतदभ्यसूयन्तो नानुतिष्ठन्ति मे मतम् ।
सर्वज्ञानविमूढांस्तान् विद्धि नष्टानचेतसः ।। ३२ ।।
ye tv etad abhyasūyanto nānutiṣṭhanti me matam
sarvajñānavimūḍhāṁs tān viddhi naṣṭān acetasaḥ

Those who always follow My teachings without disdain and perform their prescribed duties will be rid of bondage and attain salvation. (3.31)

Those who treat this teaching with disdain, with hatred towards Me, and fail to perform their prescribed duties will never gain divine, spiritual knowledge and will fall into misery. (3.32)

Comments: Learned ones perform their prescribed activities without ego and expectations on the outcome. What do others gain by following this? What is the disadvantage for someone who does not follow this? Verses (3.31) and (3.32) answer these questions. Those who always perform their prescribed activities without disdain towards the Lord (disdain is thinking that the Lord is causing them to indulge in difficult activities) will be rid of bondage and will *also* attain salvation. Sri Rayaru in [GV] provides an interesting explanation for the use of the term *api* (meaning also), in verse (3.31). This verse states that anyone who follows the path indicated will eventually attain salvation. The use of *api* implies that salvation is assured for those who have achieved self-realization (*aparoksha jnanis*).

Verse (3.32) clarifies that those who do not follow this path due to false knowledge will not only be denied salvation but will be destined to unending misery.

Behaviour is Moulded by Intrinsic Nature

सदृशं चेष्टते स्वस्याः प्रकृतेर्ज्ञानवानपि ।
प्रकृतिं यान्ति भूतानि निग्रहः किं करिष्यति ।। ३३।।

sadṛśaṁ ceṣṭate svasyāḥ prakṛter jñānavān api
prakṛtiṁ yānti bhūtāni nigrahaḥ kiṁ kariṣyati

Even learned ones will behave based on their innate nature. Everyone is bound by their intrinsic nature. What

will be accomplished by just controlling the sense organs? (3.33)

Comments: If one is denied salvation for not following the path described previously, why does one not follow this path? This verse answers by stating that everyone behaves based on their predisposition. Even learned ones are not immune to the effects of attachment and aversion. The intrinsic nature of a soul causes one to behave in a particular manner. Mere controlling of sense organs will not be of much help. Verse (3.31) also indicates that one cannot transform others' intrinsic nature.

इन्द्रियस्येन्द्रियस्यार्थे रागद्वेषौ व्यवस्थितौ ।
तयोर्न वशमागच्छेत् तौ ह्यस्य परिपन्थिनौ ।। ३४ ।।

indriyasyendriyasyārthe rāgadveṣau vyavasthitau
tayor na vaśam āgacchet tau hy asya paripanthinau

Every sense organ has natural attachment and hatred related to the respective sense object. A seeker should not be influenced by the emotions of attachment and aversion, as they are the real enemies which inhibit a seeker's progress on the spiritual path. (3.34)

Comments: In verse (3.30), it was stated that one must perform one's prescribed duties as an offering to the Lord and verse (3.31) stated the advantage of such an action. However, verse (3.33) indicated that one's activities are governed by one's innate nature. If so, how can one then act as instructed in verse (3.30)? This verse answers this question by stating that ones' activities are modulated by ones' emotions such as attachment and aversion.

Even though it is extremely difficult to control these emotions, one must make a sincere attempt. The deserving ones will surely succeed.

श्रेयान् स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात् स्वनुष्ठितात् ।
स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः ।। ३५ ।।

śreyān svadharmo viguṇaḥ paradharmāt svanuṣṭhitāt
svadharme nidhanaṁ śreyaḥ paradharmo bhayāvahaḥ

It is better for one to perform prescribed duties (in accordance with one's innate nature), even if done imperfectly, than take up duties (even those well executed) against one's innate nature. It is better to die performing one's relevant duties as taking up non-relevant duties will only lead to downfall. (3.35)

Comments: In the beginning of this chapter, in verse (3.1), Arjuna asks Krishna two questions. (i) If knowledge is superior to action, why perform any activity at all? (ii) Since actions such as waging a war can have negative consequences such as killing elders and teachers, why indulge in such a war? Lord Krishna responded to the first question in verse (3.3) and aspects of the second question in verses (3.30) and (3.34) by stating that Arjuna should wage the war as an offering to the Lord without getting influenced by emotions. This verse answers the 'why' aspect of the second question. Everyone is prescribed certain responsibilities in a society based on their personal situations. Arjuna belonged to the ruling *kshatriya* class and has an obligation to protect his citizens. Hence, the best path for him is to wage this war despite its unpleasant consequences, rather than shirk his responsibilities and take up some other vocation such as studying, teaching etc.

Why Do People Sin?

अर्जुन उवाच ।
अथ केन प्रयुक्तोऽयं पापं चरति पूरुषः ।
अनिच्छन्नपि वार्ष्णेय बलादिव नियोजितः ।। ३६।।
arjuna uvāca
atha kena prayuktoyaṁ pāpaṁ carati pūruṣaḥ
anicchann api vārṣṇeya balād iva niyojitaḥ

Arjuna said:

O Krishna (from the lineage of Vrushni)! Why does one indulge in sinful activities even when not inclined to do so, as if one was forced to do so? Who prompts this behavior? (3.36)

Comments: In verse (3.34), the Lord instructs that one should conquer emotions such as desire and aversion which lead one to downfall. Arjuna seems to be asking Him which emotion is the strongest and most difficult to conquer even when one has the right intentions.

Desire and Anger Cause One to Sin

श्रीभगवानुवाच :
काम एष क्रोध एष रजोगुणसमुद्भवः।
महाशनो महापाप्मा विद्ध्येनमिह वैरिणम् ।। ३७ ।।
śrībhagavān uvāca
kāma eṣa krodha eṣa rajoguṇasamudbhavaḥ
mahāśano mahāpāpmā viddhy enam iha vairiṇam

The Lord said:

Desire and anger push one to commit sinful activities. These are born out of the natural attribute of passion. One can never satiate them. They are the greatest enemies of a seeker. Among them, desire is the stronger enemy as it is the root cause for anger. (3.37)

Comments: In verses (2.62) and (2.63), the relationship and interconnection between the emotions of desire, anger, miserliness, obsession, arrogance, and jealousy were discussed. Desire or lust is the root cause for all these emotions which causes one's downfall. Anger arises out of the attribute of passion, but desire is the root cause for anger. The Lord uses the term *mahashana* to describe desire, meaning that it can never be satiated. Everyone knows by experience that cravings of sense organs can never be permanently satiated by indulging in them. Even when one consumes very tasty, sumptuous food and feels contented, that feeling evaporates by the next day and cravings will resurface. Trying to satiate desire by indulgence is like trying to douse a fire with ghee. The fire continues to rage. Desire or lust is the root cause of one's downfall and prevents one from achieving liberation. Sri Rayaru in [GV[explains that the emotion of desire is influenced by the demon Kalinemi.

Fire, Mirror, and Fetus

धूमेनाऽव्रियते वह्निर्यथाऽऽदर्शो मलेन च ।
यथोल्बेनाऽवृतो गर्भस्तथा तेनेदमावृतम् ।। ३८ ।।

dhūmenāvriyate vahnir yathādarśo malena ca
yatholbenāvṛto garbhas tathā tenedam āvṛtam

Just as smoke hides fire, just as dust covers a mirror and just as a womb covers a fetus, the emotion of desire (lust) envelopes everyone. (3.38)

Comments: While the previous verse (3.37) identified desire or lust as the root cause of evil, this verse explains the strength of this emotion through three different examples. Sri Rayaru in [GV] explains the reason for using these three different examples. These are related respectively to the three classes of beings, namely pious, passionate, and ignorant. Pious souls can also get enveloped by lust just as smoke covers a fire. However, just as one can see and feel the fire to some extent even when covered by smoke, pious beings can visualize the Lord even when influenced by desire. So they have the most to gain by controlling desire. Passionate souls are covered by desire just as dirt covers a mirror. With some effort, one can wipe the mirror clean and likewise passionate souls with effort can overcome the influence of desire. Ignorant souls are under the tight grip of desire just like a womb covers a fetus strongly. Such souls who are under the constant influence of lust can never overcome this emotion and fail to realize the Lord.

Sri Rayaru provides a second explanation for the three analogies. These analogies are related to the Lord, one's mind and an individual soul, respectively. The Lord is self-effulgent but when one is covered by desire, the Lord cannot be seen just as fire cannot be seen when covered by smoke. When a mirror is covered with dust one cannot see the reflection of the original object. Similarly, when one's mind is covered by desire, one cannot visualize the Lord. Thirdly, when one is in the very tight grip of lust

just as a fetus is covered by a strong womb, one cannot obtain true divine, spiritual knowledge.

आवृतं ज्ञानमेतेन ज्ञानिनो नित्यवैरिणा ।
कामरूपेण कौन्तेय दुष्पूरेणानलेन च ॥ ३९ ॥
āvṛtaṁ jñānam etena jñānino nityavairiṇā
kāmarupeṇa kaunteya duṣpūreṇānalena ca

O Son of Kunti! Desire is the greatest enemy of a seeker. It can never be satiated, and it is never satisfied. It can shroud the intellect of even learned ones. (3.39)

Comments: The Lord continues to answer Arjuna's question from verse (3.36). Does desire or lust impact even those who have acquired spiritual knowledge? This verse answers by stating that even learned ones are impacted by the force of lust. Previously it was stated that desire shrouds the three entities – knowledge about the Lord, knowledge about the individual and knowledge about the individual's mind. Even spiritual knowledge learnt through a teacher can get shrouded by lust and prevent a seeker from acquiring divine knowledge. Lust is never satiated. It is even stronger than fire. After all a fire gets extinguished once it consumes flammable material in its way. But lust remains unsatiated even after one indulges it.

इन्द्रियाणि मनोबुद्धिरस्याधिष्ठानमुच्यते ।
एतैर्विमोहयत्येष ज्ञानमावृत्य देहिनम् ॥ ४० ॥
indriyāṇi mano buddhir asyādhiṣṭhānam ucyate
etair vimohayaty eṣa jñānam āvṛtya dehinam

Desire finds a home in one's sense organs, mind, and intellect. It is through these elements that desire clouds one's judgement and leads one astray. (3.40)

Comments: Where does the quality of desire/lust reside in an individual? Lord Krishna previously stated that desire is the strongest enemy that comes in the way of one's spiritual journey. So, it is natural for one to look for the source for desire. After all, if one wants to conquer an enemy, one needs to know the location of the enemy. This verse answers by stating that lust finds a home in one's sense organs, mind, and intellect.

Control Sense Organs to Overcome Desire

तस्मात्त्वमिन्द्रियाण्यादौ नियम्य भरतर्षभ ।
पाप्मानं प्रजहि ह्येनं ज्ञानविज्ञाननाशनम् ॥ ४१ ॥
tasmāt tvam indriyāṇy ādau niyamya bharatarṣabha
pāpmānaṁ prajahi hy enaṁ jñānavijñānanāśanam

O Arjuna (Superior among Bharatas)! Therefore, you should first control sense organs and destroy desire which can shroud both ordinary and special spiritual knowledge. (3.41)

Comments: The Lord continues to provide answers to Arjuna's question in a logical manner. If desire has its home in one's sense organs (including mind) and intellect, how does one control desire? The Lord answers by stating that one needs to control the sense organs to be able to control desire. Desire is a strong force that can shroud both ordinary and special knowledge (*jnana* and *vijnana*). Ordinary knowledge refers to knowledge that one acquires through study and through teachers. Special knowledge

refers to the deep knowledge that one acquires by study, meditation, and contemplation of scriptural texts such as the **Vedas**, **Puranas** etc.

In the current context, Arjuna's knowledge is shrouded by his mental weakness due to the fear of losing his near and dear ones in the war. The Lord exhorts him to conquer his mind and focus on performing his prescribed duty.

At this stage, it is useful to understand the concept of desire. Scriptures state that there are four aspects to one's activities – *dharma* (right conduct), *artha* (material riches), *kama* (desire) and *moksha* (liberation). There is a discussion in the **Mahabharata** regarding the relative importance of these four aspects. Vidura states that *moksha* is the most important one as that is everyone's goal. Bheema states that *kama* is the most important. Naturally, everyone is curious to find out more. Bheema states that desire can be either lofty (positive) or primal (negative). After all, one would work towards *moksha* only when one has the desire (*kama*) to achieve *moksha*. So, lofty desires are not prohibited. It is primal desire or lust that entangles living beings.

Know Thy Lord and Overcome Desires

इन्द्रियाणि पराण्याहुरिन्द्रियेभ्यः परं मनः ।
मनसस्तु परा बुद्धिर्यो बुद्धेः परतस्तु सः ।। ४२ ।।

indriyāṇi parāṇy āhur indriyebhyaḥ paraṁ manaḥ
manasas tu parā buddhir yo buddheḥ paratas tu saḥ

It is said that the sense organs are superior, and the mind is more superior to them. Intellect is superior to the

mind and the ultimate consciousness (the Supreme Lord) is even more superior to the intellect. (3.42)

Comments: After describing the impact that desire/lust has on a seeker's spiritual journey and stating that desire is rooted in the sense organs, it was concluded that one must exert control over the sense organs in order to conquer desire. It was also indicated that desire is an immensely powerful emotion and even learned ones fall prey to it. A natural question that one would have at this stage is as follows – how can one control the sense organs (including the mind)? This verse answers by indicating that the weapon to conquer desire is knowledge. As the enemy resides in an individual's faculties one must understand the relative importance of various faculties. Only then can one conquer desire. To control desire, one must control one's sense organs. To control the sense organs, one must conquer obsession with objects of sensory perception and to do this one must control the mind. To control the mind, one must be able to control the intellect. But these are all inert entities. How can they help one control desire? Sri Rayaru [GV] explains the inner meaning of this verse by explaining that the faculties indicated here imply the respective controlling deities who activate the faculties. The relative gradation among the faculties and their controlling deities implied in this verse is as follows. Sense organs (and their controlling deities such as Indra) are superior to other organs in the body (and their controlling deities such as Prithvi). Objects of sensory perception (and their controlling deities such as Parvati) are superior to the sense organs (and their controlling deities). The Mind (and its controlling deity such as Rudra) is superior to objects of sensory perception

(and their controlling deities). The Intellect (and controlling deity such as Saraswati) is superior to the mind (and its controlling deities). The principle of consciousness (and its controlling deities such as Brahma) is superior to the intellect (and its controlling deities). The unmanifest principle (inert nature and its controlling deity Mahalakshmi) is superior to the principle of consciousness. The supreme Lord Almighty is superior to the unmanifest principle (and to all controlling deities). The Lord has indicated many times that one must perform one's prescribed duties without expectations, as an offering to Him. This verse gives everyone an assurance that we are not alone in this universe and the various angelic forces that control all activities in this universe, and indeed in our bodies can help us in conquering desire if we approach our prescribed duties with sincerity and as an offering to the Lord.

एवं बुद्धेः परं बुद्ध्वा संस्तभ्याऽत्मानमात्मना ।
जहि शत्रुं महाबाहो कामरूपं दुरासदम् ।। ४३ ।।
evaṁ buddheḥ paraṁ buddhvā saṁstabhyātmānam ātmanā
jahi śatruṁ mahābāho kāmarūpaṁ durāsadam

O Arjuna, The one with strong arms! With proper knowledge of the Lord Almighty, the Supreme Principle, control your mind with your intellect and defeat the enemy called desire and focus your mind on your duty. (3.43)

Comments: The Lord concludes His teaching in this chapter by exhorting Arjuna to control his emotions and focus on performing his prescribed duty of fighting the just war by submitting to His will.

Summary of Chapter 3

This chapter is a continuation of chapter 2, where the Lord provides more details on the concept of duties without expectations. In the first 2 verses (3.1,3.2), Arjuna expresses confusion about the superiority between the paths of knowledge and action. In verses (3.3-3.9), the Lord teaches that both these paths lead to liberation and the choice of path depends on one's innate nature, talent, and background. The Lord cautions Arjuna against avoiding all actions as no one can survive without performing some action or the other. The Lord also provides clarification on the nature of duties that are prescribed to living beings. In verses (3.10-3.13), the Lord introduces the concept of *yagna* (ritual sacrifice) and the need for one to perform them to propitiate the deities who govern the various entities essential for the functioning of this universe. The Lord explains the Cyclic Order of the Universe in verses (3.14-3,16) where the interrelationships among the various constituents of the universe, namely – the individual souls, the deities, inert nature and the supreme Lord are briefly presented. For the universe to function, everyone must play their designated role in the circle of life. In verses (3.17-3.21), the Lord teaches that those who have achieved the state of ultimate consciousness and have realized the Lord have no obligation to perform. duties. Likewise, souls that are liberated have no obligation to perform any activities. However, they continue to perform activities to set an example to the masses. Such souls do enjoy deeper levels of bliss in *moksha*. In verses (3.22-.3.24), the Lord clarifies that He has no obligation to perform any activity but does so out of pure compassion to set an example to others and to ensure order in society.

Verses (3.25-3.29) describe the manner of activities performed by the ignorant ones and the learned ones. It also briefly describes the divisions and distinctions among the three constituents of the universe (the Lord Almighty, individual souls, and inert nature) in terms of their attributes and actions. Learned ones understand these divisions and are aware that they do not act independently. In verse (3.30), the Lord summarizes the previous verses and instructs Arjuna to overcome ego and attachment and wage the war as an offering to Him. In verses (3.33) to (3.35), the Lord speaks about the strong influence of one's innate nature on one's activities. In verse (3.36), Arjuna asks Krishna why one indulges in sinful activities even when one is not inclined to do so. The Lord provides a detailed response to Arjuna in a logical, sequential manner in verses (3.37) to (3.43). To conquer desire, one must control one's sense organs, mind, and intellect. As the faculties in our bodies are controlled by angelic forces with relative gradation which are working under the control of the supreme Lord, one must focus on performing one's prescribed duties as an offering to the Lord and, by His grace, conquer desire.

इति तृतीयोऽध्यायः

End of Chapter 3

चतुर्थोऽध्यायः– ज्ञानयोगः
Chapter 4 - Wisdom in Action

Chapter Introduction: This chapter of 42 verses is known as *Jnana Yoga* (The Path of Knowledge). It is predominantly about the spiritual knowledge that a seeker needs to perform prescribed action (*karma*). Knowledge regarding the individual souls, various deities and the attributes of the Lord Almighty are explained to instill devotion in a seeker. The Lord explains that He incarnates in this world from time to time to establish virtue and to vanquish immorality. Knowledge about the various types of actions – right action, wrong action and inaction are also covered here. In the previous chapter, in verse (3.8), the Lord taught that one must perform one's prescribed duties without expectations (*nishkama karma*). In this chapter, till verse (4.15), some important attributes of the Lord Almighty are described. Verses (4.16) to (4.23) provide a comparison of *nishkama karma* to other types of activities with details of the types of *nishkama karma* such as worship and sacrifice. A central feature of this chapter is the classification and description of the different types of sacrifices (*yagna*) or austerities that *yogis* perform. These are described in verses (4.25) to (4.30).

Succession of Knowledge

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

इमं विवस्वते योगं प्रोक्तवानहमव्ययम् ।

विवस्वान् मनवे प्राह मनुरिक्ष्वाकवेऽब्रवीत् ॥ १ ॥

śrībhagavān uvāca
imaṁ vivasvate yogaṁ proktavān aham avyayam
vivasvān manave prāha manur ikṣvākavebravīt

The Lord said:

I declared this salvation conferring imperishable *yoga* to Vivaswan (Surya, the Sun deity), who in turn passed on the knowledge to his son Vaivaswata Manu. And Manu preached this to his son Ikshwaku. (4.1)

Comments: In verse (3.30), the Lord taught that one should perform one's prescribed duties without expectations as an offering to Him. In verses (3.31), (3.32) and others the Lord indicated the advantages and disadvantages of performing or not performing the duties as stated. The Lord backs up these arguments by providing examples of seekers in the past who have followed the path shown by the Lord and have achieved greatness. The Lord uses the term *avyaya* (imperishable) to indicate the permanent nature of such divine, spiritual knowledge. So, the reference to deities who over time had acted as advised previously is very pertinent.

एवं परम्पराप्राप्तम् इमं राजर्षयो विदुः ।
स कालेनेह महता योगो नष्टः परंतप ।। २ ।।

evaṁ paramparāprāptam imaṁ rājarṣayo viduḥ
sa kāleneha mahatā yogo naṣṭaḥ paraṁtapa

Emperors and *rishis* (sages) learnt and taught this knowledge successively from one generation to the next. O Parantapa (Arjuna, The tormentor of enemies)! Due to the passage of time this knowledge has disappeared. (4.2)

Comments: Sri Rayaru ascribes in [GV] 2 meanings to the word '*rajarshi*'. One meaning *raja* + *rishi* = emperors + sages. Second one meaning *rajasu rushayaha* = superior among emperors. This is important because

Arjuna is also a king, and many emperors, sages, and superior emperors had followed the path taught by Krishna, implying that Arjuna should take note of these examples. While that knowledge had passed on from one generation to the next, it had faded due to the passage of time. Hence the need for Lord Krishna to reiterate them here.

स एवायं मया तेऽद्य योगः प्रोक्तः पुरातनः ।
भक्तोऽसि मे सखा चेति रहस्यं ह्येतदुत्तमम् ॥ ३ ॥
sa evāyaṁ mayā tedya yogaḥ proktaḥ purātanaḥ
bhaktosi me sakhā ceti rahasyaṁ hy etad uttamam

The same ancient supreme and secretive knowledge has been imparted to you by Me, for you are both a devotee and a friend to Me. (4.3)

Comments: The Lord states that Arjuna is receiving this precious and confidential teaching as Arjuna is His devotee and friend (Verse (2.7)). Sri Rayaru explains in [GV] that the use of the term *hi* implies two reasons for the Lord doing so-

* I am teaching this to you as you are My devotee and friend.
* This ancient knowledge is supreme and secretive.

The spiritual knowledge taught in the **Gita** is a summary of the scriptures such as **Pancha Ratra** that was taught by Lord Vishnu to deities such as Brahma, Vayu, Rudra, Indra, Surya, Yama, the Ashwini twins etc. In verse (3.20), the example of king Janaka was quoted to demonstrate the practice of *nishkama karma* among householders (who have family and societal responsibilities).

The three verses (4.1) to (4.3) give examples of other great souls who have benefitted from this knowledge.

अर्जुन उवाच :

अपरं भवतो जन्म परं जन्म विवस्वतः ।

कथमेतद् विजानीयां त्वमादौ प्रोक्तवानिति ॥ ४ ॥

arjuna uvāca
aparaṁ bhavato janma paraṁ janma vivasvataḥ
katham etad vijānīyāṁ tvam ādau proktavān iti

Arjuna said:

Krishna! Your birth is in recent times. Surya (the Sun deity) was born a long time ago. How am I to understand that you taught this knowledge to Surya? (4.4)

Comments: In verse (3.30), the Lord stated that to achieve liberation one must perform one's prescribed duties without expectation, as an offering to Him. This implies that the Lord is supreme and worthy of worship. In other verses such as (2.12), the Lord clarified that He does not experience births and deaths like individual souls. Sri Rayaru in [GV] explains that Arjuna (a *jnani* himself who had already listened to Krishna's teachings in Chapter 2 and 3) was not asking about the Lord's birth (or manifestations), but about the evidence to prove the difference between the Lord Almighty and individual souls.

The Lord's Incarnations

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

बहूनि मे व्यतीतानि जन्मानि तव चार्जुन ।

तान्यहं वेद सर्वाणि न त्वं वेत्थ परंतप ॥ ५ ॥

Śrī bhagavān uvāca
bahūni me vyatītāni janmāni tava cārjuna
tāny ahaṁ veda sarvāṇi na tvaṁ vettha Parantapa

The Lord said:

O Arjuna! Many manifestations of Mine and many births of yours have come and gone. O Parantapa! I know them all clearly, but you do not. (4.5)

Comments: By stating that He always has many manifestations, the Lord answers Arjuna's question in (4.4) as to how He taught the knowledge to Surya who has been in existence for a long time. The Lord manifests (appears) at different times which are loosely termed as the Lord's births. This is quite different from individual souls such as Arjuna who experience many births and deaths. Further, the Lord clarifies that He is aware of all His incarnations and all births of others, but the individual souls are not aware of their many births. Hence this verse draws out the superiority and omniscient nature of the Lord as distinct from individual souls.

अजोऽपि सन्नव्ययात्मा भूतानामीश्वरोऽपि सन् ।
प्रकृतिं स्वामधिष्ठाय सम्भवाम्यात्ममायया ।। ६ ।।
ajopi sann avyayātmā bhūtānām īśvaropi san
prakṛtiṁ svām adhiṣṭhāya saṁbhavāmy ātmamāyayā

I am not born like everyone; My body does not perish, and I am the controller of all beings. Through the entities of material nature created by Me, I manifest Myself in My transcendental form based on My own free will. (4.6)

Comments: The Lord seemed to indicate in verse (4.5) that He appears and disappears many times. But in verse (2.17), the Lord stated that He does not cease to exist. How can these statements be reconciled? The next few verses detail the concept of manifestation as it relates to the Lord. The Lord does not experience physical births as experienced by individual souls. The term birth (*janma*) when used in the context of Lord, relates to His manifestation which He does at His own free will using the entities of material nature that He Himself created. This is explained in the phrase *prakritim swam adhishtaya*. Sri Rayaru in [GV] interprets this phrase in three different ways:

* The Lord, in an incarnation such as Krishna manifests Himself through the bodies of Vasudeva and Devaki which He Himself had created.
* The Lord utilizes Goddess Durga (governor of *tamasic* nature) who is under His control, to cause ignorant souls to consider His manifestation as an ordinary birth.
* The Lord performs the above two actions of His own free will.

These 3 interpretations provide answers to the three questions that arise here.

Question 1: What does the statement that the Lord takes birth at a specific time and place when His body and soul are eternal mean? For example, the birth of Krishna to Vasudeva and Devaki.

Answer 1: Inert nature is under the control of the Lord Almighty. The Lord gives physical bodies comprised of

material nature to Vasudeva and Devaki and enters their bodies in His transcendental form and manifests Himself.

Question 2: What makes some think of the Lord as having a birth like everyone else?

Answer 2: The Lord causes ignorance in some through Goddess Durga who acts under His control.

Question 3: What benefit does the Lord get by manifesting Himself through Vasudeva and Devaki (and indeed other manifestations)?

Answer 3: The Lord's actions are due to His free will which is His innate nature and not for any benefit.

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवतिभारत ।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदाऽऽत्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥ ७ ॥
yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata
abhyutthānam adharmasya tadātmānaṁ sṛjāmy aham

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे ॥ ८ ॥
paritrāṇāya sādhūnāṁ vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām
dharmasaṁsthāpanārthāya saṁbhavāmi yuge yuge

O Bharata! Whenever there is a decline in *dharma* (virtue) and ascension of *adharma* (immoral values), I manifest Myself in this world. (4.7)

I manifest Myself from time to time to protect the virtuous, destroy the evil and to establish virtue in society. (4.8)

Comments: If the Lord has nothing to gain by incarnating, what is the purpose of His incarnations? These two verses answer by stating that the Lord incarnates purely out of His free will and out of pure compassion towards living beings. While the Lord has no obligation to incarnate at any specific time or place, generally He incarnates from time to time, to protect the virtuous whenever virtue in the society is obscured, and to destroy the evil whenever there is an ascension in immorality.

जन्म कर्म च मे दिव्यम् एवं यो वेत्ति तत्त्वतः ।
त्यक्त्वा देहं पुनर्जन्म नैति मामेति सोऽर्जुन ।। ९ ।।
janma karma ca me divyam evaṁ yo vetti tattvataḥ
tyaktvā dehaṁ punarjanma naiti mām eti sorjuna

O Arjuna! One who realizes properly that My amazing manifestations and activities are divine, will not be reborn after leaving one's body and will reach My abode. (4.9)

Comments: In every manifestation of the Lord such as Lord Narasimha, Lord Rama, Lord Krishna etc., the Lord has demonstrated extraordinary powers and activities to advance the cause of righteousness and to punish the evil. Many times, His actions are meant to set an example of ideal living as in the case of Lord Rama. These incarnations are detailed in epics such as the **Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Bhagavata** etc. It must be noted that a seeker needs to have proper understanding of the Lord's activities. This is implied using the term *tatvata*. It is quite easy to misunderstand some of the Lord's activities by looking at them peripherally. One must understand the real intent of His actions. Only then can one hope to achieve liberation. Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies that proper

knowledge about the Lord's incarnations and activities is necessary for a seeker to achieve liberation but that is not sufficient. The seeker also needs to learn about Lord's other attributes such as omnipresence, omniscient etc.

वीतरागभयक्रोधा मन्मया मामुपाश्रिताः ।
बहवो ज्ञानतपसा पूता मद्भावमागताः ॥ १० ॥
vītarāgabhayakrodhā manmayā mām upāśritāḥ
bahavo jñānatapasā pūtā madbhāvam āgatāḥ

Those who have conquered desire, fear, anger and have surrendered to Me after having accepted Me as the Omnipresent and Supreme One, get purified through learning and meditation, and eventually will reach My abode. (4.10)

Comments: The previous verse stated that a seeker needs to have proper knowledge about the Lord's incarnations and actions. This verse describes such a seeker as one who has conquered emotions such as desire (in material objects), fear, and anger. Sri Rayaru in [GV] provides an excellent explanation of this verse as having answered two important questions:

* Are there seekers who have achieved liberation by properly understanding the Lord's incarnations and activities? This verse describes the attributes of those seekers.

* How does the knowledge about the Lord's incarnations and activities lead one to liberation? This verse answers by stating that it is through surrender and devotion to the Lord.

Arjuna had expressed his surrender to the Lord in (2.7) and hence he is a very eligible seeker.

Rewards are Based on Devoted Efforts

ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम् ।
मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः ।। ११ ।।

ye yathā māṁ prapadyante tāṁs tathaiva bhajāmy aham
mama vartmānuvartante manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ

O Partha! Whoever worships Me with devotion, in whatever way, I reward them accordingly. Everyone follows the example that I set. (4.11)

Comments: In previous verses it was stated that one who worships the Lord will achieve liberation. Will all who worship the Lord achieve liberation equally? If yes, how can one account for the difference in efforts and approach? If no, isn't there partiality in result? This verse answers these questions stating that among those who worship the Lord, there are broadly two categories. The first one includes learned ones who perform activities without expectations, and surrender completely to the Lord. These seekers are destined for liberation. The second category includes those who, while aware of the supremacy of the Lord, perform rituals worshipping other deities such as Brahma, Rudra, Indra etc., seeking temporary fruits such as progeny, wealth etc. Even though this category of people performs rituals to propitiate other deities, the fact that the Lord is the ultimate destination for their efforts results in them receiving temporary rewards.

In the second half of this verse, the Lord clarifies that even offerings made by the second category of people will eventually reach Him, but they will not be aware of this fact. The learned ones who act without any expectation are fully aware of this. Thus, the Lord rewards seekers based on their effort, conviction, and attitude, purely based on merit. So, there is no question of partiality.

काङ्क्षन्तः कर्मणां सिद्धिं यजन्त इह देवताः ।
क्षिप्रं हि मानुषे लोके सिद्धिर्भवति कर्मजा ।। १२ ।।
kāṅkṣantaḥ karmaṇāṁ siddhiṁ yajanta iha devatāḥ
kṣipraṁ hi mānuṣe loke siddhir bhavati karmajā

In this world, people worship and perform sacrifices to propitiate other deities for temporary fruits. Success from these activities (although temporary) will fructify quickly. (4.12)

Comments: This verse provides the reasoning behind the explanation in the previous verse that all fruits are ultimately obtained from the Lord, regardless of the deities who are worshipped. It is seen in this world that one who propitiate other deities do receive fruits from one's efforts, but it is the Lord Almighty who ultimately grants one's wishes based on one's efforts and conviction.

Categories of Beings

चातुर्वर्ण्यं मया सृष्टं गुणकर्मविभागशः ।
तस्य कर्तारमपि मां विद्ध्यकर्तारमव्ययम् ।। १३ ।।
cāturvarṇyaṁ mayā sṛṣṭaṁ guṇakarmavibhāgaśaḥ
tasya kartāram api māṁ viddhy akartāram avyayam

I created the four categories (*varnas*) of beings based on their nature and activities. While I created them, I do not have a creator. I also do not have any obligation to act, and I am eternal. (4.13)

Comments: It was stated previously that it is essential for one to surrender to the Lord to achieve divine, spiritual knowledge and attain liberation. This verse explains the reason why one should surrender to Lord. The Lord is like a father, and children are expected to worship their father. The Lord, who gave physical bodies to individual entities, provides details of the categories of people He creates.

This is probably the most controversial and least understood verse in the **Gita** as many people associate this verse with the caste system in society. The four categories here are based on the proportion of the three innate attributes (*sattv, rajas and tamas*) of beings. How can there be four categories if there are three innate attributes? The four categories are based on the varying proportions of these three innate attributes. Sri Madhwacharya provides detailed explanations of the categories (*varnas*) and attributes (*gunas*) in [GB] and [GTN]. Individual souls are basically of three types – angels (deities), humans, and demons. Angels have the quality of pure *sattv* and are destined for liberation. Demons have pure *tamas* and are destined for hell. Humans have *rajas* mixed with varying proportions of *sattv*, *rajas* and *tamas* resulting in *satvika rajasas*, *rajasa rajasas* and *rajasa tamasas*. Those with a *satvik rajasa* quality are destined for liberation and among them are these four categories. As explained by Sri Jaya Teertha in

[ND]– these categories are characterized by the following - (i) *sattv* is much greater than rajas *(sattv >> rajas),* (ii) *sattv* is somewhat greater than *rajas (sattv > rajas),* (iii) *sattv* and *rajas* are in equal proportion but greater than *tamas (rajas = sattv > tamas)* and, (iv) *sattv* is greater than *tamas* which is greater than *rajas (sattv > tamas > rajas)*. As stated by Sri Madhwacharya in [GB], the qualities of *sattv*, *rajas* and *tamas* are based on the level of one's devotion to Lord Almighty Vishnu. One cannot conclude one's innate nature just by one's family of birth. The categorization of beings based on one's profession or vocation (*karma*) is covered in detail in Chapter 18.

The four categories of people indicated here are *brahmanas*, *kshatriyas*, *vaishyas*, and *shudras*, which also nominally indicates the profession that they undertake, namely, scholastic pursuits, administration, commerce, and service industry. All of them are eligible for liberation. Sri Jaya Teertha in his [ND] clarifies this concept by stating that Lord Vishnu's devotees (*vaishnavas*) are considered pious because of their higher levels of *sattvic* attributes, and not due to their brahminical profession. Sri Madhwacharya in [GTN] clarifies that the categorization based on one's innate nature (*swabhava*) manifests in one's natural aptitudes such as steadfast devotion to the Lord, self-control, valor, bravery, farming, commerce, service mindedness etc. This categorization should not be equated to the societal classification based on one's family of birth (*oupadika*).

While the deities have predominant *sattv* qualities, Sri Rayaru in his **Prameya Sangraha** [PS] provides more

details on the categorization of deities. During the process of subtle creation, all individual souls obtain a subtle body called *Aniruddha deha*. During this time, the various deities get categorized - the four faced deity Brahma as *brahmin*, deities Vayudeva, Sesha, Garuda, rudra etc., as *kshatriyas*, many Suryas, some children of Aditi, many Maruts, Vasus etc., as *vyshyas*, and Ashwini twins, Prithvi, Kala, Mrutyu etc., as *shudras*. This clearly proves that there is nothing intrinsically superior or inferior about the categories. They are simply different from each other.

In the second half of this verse, the Lord clarifies that while He is the creator of these categories, He does not have a creator Himself. He also has no obligation to act.

Notes: Material nature comprises of three qualities and these are present in all living beings in varying degrees. The three qualities are *sattv*, *rajas* and *tamas*. *Sattv* is generally translated as pure, virtuous, pious etc., *rajas* as passion and *tamas* as ignorance. Those identified with the quality of *sattv* are generally known to have purity in thought, words, and actions. Sri Madhwacharya identifies an additional attribute as part of *sattv*. This attribute is devotion to the Lord as stated by Sri Madhwacharya in his [GTN] based on **Naradeeya Purana**. Hence the translation of *sattv* as pious is more appropriate as piety also implies devotion. The quality of *rajas* leads one to be passionate about material possessions and sense pleasures. For brevity, from now on *rajas* will be translated as passion. The quality of *tamas* results in ignorance and delusion and is characterized by excessive lethargy, sleepiness, and indulgence in sense pleasures. Again, for brevity *tamas* will be translated as ignorance.

Actions Never Bind the Lord

न मां कर्माणि लिम्पन्ति न मे कर्मफले स्पृहा ।
इति मां योऽभिजानाति कर्मभिर्न स बध्यते ।। १४ ।।

na māṁ karmāṇi limpanti na me karmaphale spṛhā
iti māṁ yobhijānāti karmabhir na sa badhyate

Actions do not bind Me. I have no interest in any fruits from My actions. One who truly knows Me thus will not get entangled by actions. (4.14)

Comments: In the previous verse the Lord stated that He has no obligation to perform any activities. In the next few verses, He provides the nature of His activities and contrasts them with those of individual souls. Actions do not bind the Lord. The Lord has no interest in any outcome of His actions and acts on His own free will. The reason for individual souls getting entangled in actions is their expectations. One who understands the nature of the Lord's actions will not be bound by actions. Sri Rayaru in [GV] provides a convincing explanation for the inherent difference between the Supreme Soul and the individual soul based on the choice of words in this verse. The Lord says '*yo maam iti abhijanati*', meaning the ones who know Me (*maam*, meaning Krishna) thus will not get entangled by actions. Here, the Lord's attributes are the subject matter which must be properly understood by others (*yo* = individual souls) to get released from bondage.

एवं ज्ञात्वा कृतं कर्म पूर्वैरपि मुमुक्षुभिः ।
कुरु कर्मैव तस्मात्त्वं पूर्वैः पूर्वतरं कृतम् ।। १५ ।।

evaṁ jñātvā kṛtaṁ karma pūrvair api mumukṣubhiḥ
kuru karmaiva tasmāt tvaṁ pūrvaiḥ pūrvataraṁ kṛtam

Learned ones, desirous of salvation, were aware of this truth and accordingly performed their prescribed duties. You should also follow the everlasting path traversed by these ancestors. (4.15)

Comments: Why do learned ones who are aware of the Lord's attributes about activities act at all? This verse answers by giving the examples set by earlier generations. In verse (3.30), the Lord had indicated that emperors such as Janaka achieved liberation by performing their prescribed duties without expectations. Such superior souls perform activities out of two reasons. One, to set an example for others in society and second, to experience exuberance in bliss (in *moksha*).

Types of Action

किं कर्म किमकर्मेति कवयोऽप्यत्र मोहिताः ।
तत्ते कर्म प्रवक्ष्यामि यज्ज्ञात्वा मोक्ष्यसेऽशुभात् ॥ १६ ॥
kiṁ karma kimakarmeti kavayopy atra mohitāḥ
tat te karma pravakṣyāmi yaj jñātvā mokṣyaseśubhāt

What is right action? What is inaction? Even learned ones get confused by these questions. I will explain this matter to you by knowing which, you will be rid of bondage. (4.16)

Comments: The previous verse taught that a seeker should perform prescribed duties. This verse provides details on the types of actions – right actions and inaction. Sri Rayaru in [GV] provides an interesting explanation for the use of the Sanskrit word '*tat*' in this verse. *tat* is an interesting word in Sanskrit and its meaning depends on

the context. At least 3 meanings of *tat* are – **therefore**, **that**, and **from**. The interpretations are –

* Even learned ones get confused about the concept of *karma*. **Therefore**, you must understand it properly.
* In the previous verse (4.15), it was indicated that one must perform prescribed duties (*karma*). It is **that** karma which is discussed in this verse.
* One will be rid of bondage **from (by)** acquiring this knowledge.

कर्मणो ह्यपि बोद्धव्यं बोद्धव्यं च विकर्मणः ।
अकर्मणश्च बोद्धव्यं गहना कर्मणो गतिः ॥ १७ ॥

karmaṇo hy api boddhavyaṁ boddhavyaṁ ca vikarmaṇaḥ
akarmaṇaś ca boddhavyaṁ gahanā karmaṇo gatiḥ

One should learn what constitutes right action, prohibited action and inaction, and learn about the distinction between them. All these actions are under My control. The subject of action (*karma*) is extremely complex by nature. (4.17)

Comments: In the previous verse, the words *karma* (action) and *akarma* (inaction) were used where *akarma* was also interpreted to include *vikarma* (prohibited action). In this verse, all three types of actions are explicitly stated. Sri Rayaru in [GV] stresses that one must strive hard to understand the nature of action, especially since it is an extremely complex topic.

Sri Rayaru also provides an interesting, second interpretation of this verse following Sri Madhwacharya's [GTN]. The words *karmanaha, vikarmanaha*, and

akarmanaha can be derived as – *karma* + *naha*, *vikarma* + *naha*, and *akarma* + *naha*. The word *naha* means 'from the Lord' (plural). With this derivation, this verse can also be interpreted as follows – all the three types of action (right action, prohibited action, and inaction) are implemented by the different forms of the Lord under His control. 'Different Forms' is implied by the plural (*naha*) indicated above.

कर्मण्यकर्म यः पश्येदकर्मणि च कर्म यः ।
स बुद्धिमान् मनुष्येषु स युक्तः कृत्स्नकर्मकृत् ॥ १८॥
karmaṇy akarma yaḥ paśyed akarmaṇi ca karma yaḥ
sa buddhimān manuṣyeṣu sa yuktaḥ kṛtsnakarmakṛt

The wise realize that they do not perform activities independently and even when they are not active (during sleeping, dreaming), there is activity being performed (such as breathing) by the Lord Almighty. Such a person is considered to be performing duties fully and will derive full benefits thereon. (4.18)

Comments: Having introduced the types of action in previous verses, the Lord now describes these actions in the next few verses. Prescribed duties performed by one with the knowledge that the actual work is enabled by the Lord is doing the right action (*karma*). The one who performs duties without knowing that the Lord is actually enabling one to work engages in incorrect/futile action (*akarma*). Actions not approved by the scriptures constitute prohibited action (*vikarma*).

Sri Rayaru in [GV] provides another interesting, second interpretation of this verse based on Sri Madhwacharya's [GTN]. The word *karma* can also mean the individual

soul based on the obligation to perform duties. The Lord is also termed *akarma* as He has no obligation to perform anything. With this, the verse can be interpreted to mean as follows – the one who knows that the dependent individual soul has obligation to perform duties, and that the independent Lord Almighty has no obligation for duties, is indeed knowledgeable. Such a person is performing right actions fully.

This verse is identified by Sri Madinur Vishnu Teertha in [BGS] as being the summary of this chapter. As this chapter is predominantly about the concept of action (*karma yoga*), this verse provides a succinct summary of the concepts presented.

Actions Do Not Taint the Contented and Equanimous

यस्य सर्वे समारम्भाः कामसंकल्पवर्जिताः ।
ज्ञानाग्निदग्धकर्माणं तमाहुः पण्डितं बुधाः ।। १९ ।।
yasya sarve samārambhāḥ kāmasaṁkalpavarjitāḥ
jñānāgnidagdhakarmāṇaṁ tam āhuḥ paṇḍitaṁ budhāḥ

त्यक्त्वा कर्मफलासङ्गं नित्यतृप्तो निराश्रयः ।
कर्मण्यभिप्रवृत्तोऽपि नैव किंचित्करोति सः ।। २०।।
tyaktvā karmaphalāsaṅgaṁ nityatṛpto nirāśrayaḥ
karmaṇy abhipravṛttopi naiva kiṁcit karoti saḥ

निराशीर्यतचित्तात्मा त्यक्तसर्वपरिग्रहः ।
शारीरं केवलं कर्म कुर्वन्नाप्नोति किल्बिषम् ।। २१ ।।
nirāśīr yatacittātmā tyaktasarvaparigrahaḥ
śārīraṁ kevalaṁ karma kurvan nāpnoti kilbiṣam

यदृच्छालाभसन्तुष्टो द्वन्द्वातीतो विमत्सरः ।
समः सिद्धावसिद्धौ च कृत्वाऽपि न निबद्ध्यते ।। २२ ।।
yadṛcchālābhasaṁtuṣṭo dvandvātīto vimatsaraḥ
samaḥ siddhāv asiddhau ca kṛtvāpi na nibadhyate

गतसङ्गस्य मुक्तस्य ज्ञानावस्थितचेतसः ।
यज्ञयाचरतः कर्म समग्रं प्रविलीयते ।। २३ ।।
gatasaṅgasya muktasya jñānāvasthitacetasaḥ
yajñāyācarataḥ karma samagraṁ pravilīyate

One who performs prescribed duties and sacrifices without expecting any rewards would have incinerated all activities in the fire of spiritual knowledge. Learned people consider such a person as truly knowledgeable. (4.19)

One with spiritual knowledge, who is detached from the outcomes of activities, who is ever contented, and who is focused on the Lord, even when involved in normal activities will be considered as not performing any activities. (4.20)

One who performs duties without any expectations, who has control over mind and intellect, and who has no attachment to the physical body will not be tainted by sin for actions performed solely for physical sustenance. (4.21)

One who is content with whatever is given by the Lord, who is beyond dualities (such as pain or pleasure), who harbors no jealousy and who treats success or failure with equanimity will not be entangled by actions. (4.22)

Actions will not taint one who acts without expectations, who is unattached to the physical body, who has the mind

focused on the Lord and who performs duties as an offering (*yagna*) to the Lord. (4.23)

Comments: Verse (4.18) identified a wise person as one who performs prescribed duties fully and perfectly. These five verses describe the major characteristics of such a person.

1. Pandita: Verse (4.19) describes one who has conclusive knowledge as Pandita, as recognized by learned ones. Such a person would have incinerated all activities in the fire of spiritual knowledge.

2. Ever Contented: Verse (4.20) describes a wise person as being ever contented and not having any needs. Such a person has no attachment to either activities or any outcomes from activities and considers the self as a reflection of the independent Lord. Even when performing actions, such a person is considered as not performing any action at all, meaning such actions will not be binding.

3. Detached: Verse (4.21) describes a wise person as one who performs prescribed duties with no bodily attachments. Such a person when performing day to day activities for physical sustenance will not be tainted by any sins arising from such actions.

4. Equanimous: Verse (4.22) describes a wise person as one who is not perturbed by happiness or sadness, gain, or loss etc. Such a person will not harbor jealousy over someone's success and will be content with whatever is granted by the Lord.

5. Conviction in Divine Knowledge: Verse (4.23) summarizes the characteristics of the wise person described in the previous 4 verses and states that such a person is able to achieve these characteristics due to single minded focus on the Lord. Such a person will indeed perform all prescribed activities without expectations, without bodily attachment, with knowledge about the independent Lord, and as an offering (*yagna*) to please the Lord. Such activities will not entangle a wise person and will pave the way for liberation by the grace of the Lord.

Verse (4.22) seems to identify two characteristics of a wise person – one who is beyond dualities and one who is equipoised in success or failure. Do these both mean the same and hence is there a repetition here? No. Sri Jaya Teertha in [PD] clarifies that these two characteristics have a causal relationship. One who is tolerant of dualities is equipoised in success or failure.

Spiritual Sacrifices

ब्रह्मार्पणं ब्रह्म हविर्ब्रह्माग्नौ ब्रह्मणा हुतम् ।
ब्रह्मैव तेन गन्तव्यं ब्रह्मकर्मसमाधिना ।। २४ ।।

brahmārpaṇaṁ brahma havir brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam
brahmaiva tena gantavyaṁ brahmakarmasamādhinā

All articles and substances used in performing Vedic rituals (*yagna*) belong to the Lord. Various sacrifices, ghee and indeed fire itself and the ritual activities are all under the control of the Lord as He pervades and owns everything. One who understands this truth will indeed reach the Lord's abode. (4.24)

Comments: In the previous verse, a wise person is described as someone who has conviction in divine knowledge. This verse explains and describes such conviction. All aspects involved in the performance of *yagna* (sacrifice) are under the control of the Lord. This is also consistent with verse (4.21), where a wise person was described as one who is detached. Sri Rayaru in [GV] explains the proper way of interpreting compound words such as *brahma havi* following the interpretation in Sri Madhwacharya's [GTN]. There are multiple ways of deriving such compound words in Sanskrit. There is a danger that one can interpret *brahma havi* to mean that the sacrifices offered in a sacrifice is identical with the Lord. Sri Madhwacharya in [GTN] interprets *brahma havi* as *brahmani* + *havi*, meaning the sacrifices offered in a sacrifice belongs to the Lord. This applies to other aspects appearing this verse. This interpretation is also consistent with the characteristics of a wise person described in verses (4.19) – (4.23).

Notes: The Sanskrit word *yagna* does not have a direct equivalent in English. In general, *yagna* means an intense act or endeavor that is performed for a specific purpose such as propitiating the Lord Almighty or some other deities. Many scholars loosely translate *yagna* as sacrifice, perhaps referring to offerings that are sacrificed during fire rituals. In keeping with the traditional translation, *yagna* will be translated as sacrifice in this book with the knowledge that *yagna* actually stands for an intense endeavor performed for a specific purpose.

दैवमेवापरे यज्ञं योगिनः पर्युपासते ।

ब्रह्माग्नावपरे यज्ञं यज्ञेनैवोपजुह्वति ।। २५ ।।

daivam evāpare yajñaṁ yoginaḥ paryupāsate
brahmāgnāv apare yajñaṁ yajñenaivopajuhvati

Some seekers (especially ascetics) consider worshipping the Lord as itself equivalent to performing a Vedic ritual (hence the Lord also goes by the name of *yagna*). Others (especially householders) visualize the Lord in the sacrificial fire and perform the rituals. (4.25)

Comments: The next six verses (4-25) to (4-30) describe the different types of *yagna* (sacrifice) performed by different seekers to stress the point that *yagna* does not mean only performing ritual sacrifices with fire but it also has a metaphorical meaning.

In a later verse (4.31) it will be indicated that one who does not perform sacrificial rituals will not achieve anything of value either in this world or in other worlds. This verse clarifies that for some seekers such as ascetics, worshipping the Lord is itself a Vedic sacrificial ritual. In verse (4.23), it was indicated that wise people perform activities for the sake of *yagna* (*yagnaya acharate*). This verse, by specifically stating that ascetics worship *yagna* (the Lord), confirms that the word *yagna* also refers to the Lord Almighty.

श्रोत्रादीनीन्द्रियाण्यन्ये संयमाग्निषु जुह्वति ।
शब्दादीन् विषयानन्य इन्द्रियाग्निषु जुह्वति ।। २६ ।।
śrotrādīnīndriyāṇy anye saṁyamāgniṣu juhvati
śabdādīn viṣayān anya indriyāgniṣu juhvati

सर्वाणीन्द्रियकर्माणि प्राणकर्माणि चापरे ।
आत्मसंयमयोगाग्नौ जुह्वति ज्ञानदीपिते ।। २७ ।।

sarvāṇīndriyakarmāṇi prāṇakarmāṇi cāpare
ātmasaṁyamayogāgnau juvhati jñānadīpite

Some offer sense organs of perception such as ears and eyes in the sacrificial fire of sense control. Some others offer sense objects such as sound (music) in the sacrificial fire called sense organs (such as ears). (4.26)

Some offer activities of sense organs of action (hands, legs etc.), and five types of life breath, in the sacrificial fire of self-control which glows with spiritual knowledge. (4.27)

Comments: *yagna* is a generic word that many associate with the physical act of performing Vedic rituals with fire etc. These verses describe *yagna* metaphorically as defining different types of sacrifices performed by seekers.

Some seekers exercise control of sense organs of perception - eyes, ears, tongue, nose, and skin, by restraining excessive indulgence in sense objects and divert these sense organs towards the Lord. For example, restraining ears from listening to meaningless worldly stories and focusing them on the stories of the Lord Almighty. Even when consuming objects of senses such as food, seekers partake in them with the knowledge that they are offered to the in-dwelling Lord.

द्रव्ययज्ञास्तपोयज्ञा योगयज्ञास्तथापरे ।

स्वाध्यायज्ञानयज्ञाश्च यतयः संशितव्रताः ॥ २८ ॥

dravyayajñās tapoyajñā yogayajñās tathāpare
svādhyāyajñānayajñāś ca yatayaḥ saṁśitavratāḥ

Some perform sacrifices with earned wealth by donating to the deserving. Some perform sacrifices through penance. Some perform sacrifices through meditation. Some perform sacrifices by studying and analyzing scriptures such as the **Vedas**. Some perform sacrifices by teaching spiritual texts to others. All of them make great attempts to propitiate the Lord through their sacrifices. (4.28)

Comments: This verse clarifies that sacrifices are performed physically, vocally, and mentally with examples. Some physically donate part of their wealth generously to the deserving. Some undertake strict austerity such as maintaining silence for an extended period time. This requires great mental concentration. Some undertake extensive studies and analysis of concepts in spiritual texts such as the **Vedas**. Some distribute their knowledge vocally through teaching and lectures. All these seekers utilize the tools and talent that the Lord gave them as a selfless sacrifice and submit them to the Lord Almighty.

अपाने जुह्वति प्राणं प्राणेऽपानं तथाऽपरे ।
प्राणापानगती रुद्ध्वा प्राणायामपरायणाः ॥ २९ ॥

apāne juvhati prāṇaṁ prāṇepānaṁ tathāpare
prāṇāpānagatī ruddhvā prāṇāyāmaparāyaṇāḥ

Some perform sacrifices through breathing and breath control. They offer the exhaling breath to the inhaling breath and the inhaling breath to the exhaling breath and sacrifice the act of holding the breath. (4.29)

Comments: Some seekers take the path of *pranayama* or management of life breath to achieve self-discipline.

These seekers offer the act of breath retention (*kumbhaka*) as a sacrifice to the Lord.

अपरे नियताहाराः प्राणान् प्राणेषु जुह्वति ।
सर्वेऽप्येते यज्ञविदो यज्ञक्षपितकल्मषाः ।। ३० ।।
apare niyatāhārāḥ prāṇān prāṇeṣu juvhati
sarvepy ete yajñavido yajñakṣapitakalmaṣāḥ

Some limit the amount of food they consume and control the ability of sense organs to indulge in consumption of sense objects. All of them understand the meaning of sacrifice and get rid of sins through their chosen method of sacrifice. (4.30)

Comments: In verses (4.26) and (4.27) it was stated that some seekers perform the sacrifice of controlling their sense organs. In this verse, there is a specific example of seekers controlling the consumption of food to drive home the fact that of all indulgences, food is the most difficult to control. As was indicated in verse (2.59), when one practices fasting, the sense organs get weakened, but the craving for tasty food does not go away. When one ages, the sense organs start losing their effectiveness one by one, but the tongue and its craving for food never goes away. Some seekers perform the difficult task of controlling their food intake (just enough for physical existence) by will power and offer this sacrifice to the Lord.

Sri Rayaru in [GV] gives an additional interpretation for this verse. Sense organs are controlled by deities such as Indra, Surya etc. Deities such as Garuda, Rudra, and Sesha who control the functioning of the mind are superior to the deities controlling the sense organs. Some seekers understand this hierarchy, control their indulgence in food

through will power and offer that as a sacrifice to the Lord.

यज्ञशिष्टामृतभुजो यान्ति ब्रह्म सनातनम् ।
नायं लोकोऽस्त्ययज्ञस्य कुतोऽन्यः कुरुसत्तम ।। ३१।।
yajñaśiṣṭāmṛtabhujo yānti brahma sanātanam
nāyaṁ lokosty ayajñasya kutonyaḥ Kurusattama

O Kurusattama (Arjuna, Superior among Kurus)! One who consumes the leftover nectar after performing these sacrifices will indeed reach the Lord (who has no beginning or end). One who does not perform these sacrifices will not achieve anything of value in this world, leave alone in the heavenly worlds. (4.31)

Comments: After describing the types of sacrifices performed by seekers in verses (4-25) to (4-30), this verse describes the difference in rewards attained by those who perform these types of sacrifices and those who do not. One who performs such selfless sacrifices will indeed reach the Lord and others who do not perform these would have wasted their lives. It is interesting to note that this verse specifically states that those who do not perform such sacrifices will not receive any rewards in this world. How can one prove that? One of the sacrifices identified was control of food consumption. It is seen by experience that those who indulge in excessive food consumption on a continuous basis end up with lifestyle diseases such obesity, blood pressure etc. Hence, these austerities are also required to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

एवं बहुविधा यज्ञा वितता ब्रह्मणो मुखे ।
कर्मजान् विद्धि तान् सर्वान् एवं ज्ञात्वा विमोक्ष्यसे ।। ३२।।

evaṁ bahuvidhā yajñā vitatā brahmaṇo mukhe
karmajān viddhi tān sarvān evaṁ jñātvā vimokṣyase

All these different types of sacrifices are offered to the Lord Almighty. Understanding that all these sacrifices arise from mental, vocal, and physical actions, conduct your prescribed duties with proper knowledge and achieve release from bondage. (4.32)

Comments: This verse clarifies that different types of sacrifices are directed towards the Lord. This point is expanded later in verse (9.24), where the Lord declares that He is the owner and indeed the destination for all sacrifices. After describing the various types of sacrifices performed by seekers, the Lord asks Arjuna to understand that these sacrifices are to be performed mentally, vocally, and physically, and that he should engage in his prescribed duty of participating in the war to protect his citizens. This advice is especially important as one can question the need to indulge in a destructive war when one can achieve liberation by following other sacrifices such as the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge. This verse clarifies that one must perform one's prescribed duty as a worship to the Lord, which is also a form of sacrifice.

Spiritual Knowledge Completes Action

श्रेयान् द्रव्यमयाद् यज्ञाज्ज्ञानयज्ञः परंतप ।
सर्वं कर्माखिलं पार्थ ज्ञाने परिसमाप्यते ।। ३३ ।।

śreyān dravyamayād yajñāj jñānayajñaḥ paraṁtapa
sarvaṁ karmākhilaṁ pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate

O Parantapa! Sacrifice in the form of acquiring and imparting spiritual knowledge is much better than sacrifice in the form of offering articles to those in need (and other types of sacrifices described before). O Partha! Even performing prescribed activities requires proper knowledge for fruitful completion. (4.33)

Comments: Verses (4.25) to (4.30) described different types of sacrifices performed by seekers in their quest for self-realization and liberation. Among the different types of sacrifices described, which is superior? This verse answers by stating that sacrifice in the form of acquisition and dissemination of divine, spiritual knowledge is most superior. The reason for its supremacy is its ability to bring to fruition prescribed duties performed by a seeker. After all, one cannot perform any activity if one does not have the knowledge of the need for such action, method of performance of such action etc. One cannot conclude that only acquiring such knowledge is good enough. Such knowledge must be accompanied by proper performance of prescribed duties for one to succeed in one's spiritual journey.

तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।
उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्वदर्शिनः ॥ ३४ ॥

tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā
upadekṣyanti te jñānaṁ jñāninas tattvadarśinaḥ

You can learn that knowledge by prostrating, by asking critical questions, and by serving learned ones. Such scholars who have realized true divine, spiritual knowledge will educate you. (4.34)

Comments: Given that sacrifice related to knowledge is declared as superior, how does one obtain such knowledge? This verse answers by stating that one must first find a teacher who has truly realized divine, spiritual knowledge and approach that teacher with respect, humility, and an inquisitive mind to learn. In verse (2.7), Arjuna had surrendered to Lord Krishna as his teacher to help clear his doubts. One must follow this example to acquire true knowledge.

यज्ज्ञात्वा न पुनर्मोहम् एवं यास्यसि पाण्डव ।
येन भूतान्यशेषेण द्रक्ष्यस्यात्मन्यथो मयि ॥ ३५ ॥
yaj jñātvā na punar moham evaṁ yāsyasi pāṇḍava
yena bhūtāny aśeṣeṇa drakṣyasy ātmany atho mayi

O Pandava! You will be rid of ignorance once you understand My teaching. By acquiring this knowledge, you will realize that all beings exist in Me and that I am present in everyone. (4.35)

Comments: Arjuna was stricken with grief at the thought of losing his loved ones in the war. As discussed in Chapter 1, this resulted in clouding of his judgement and led to his questions and doubts about duty, knowledge etc. Lord Krishna states in this verse that Arjuna would overcome his ignorance by understanding Krishna's teaching which would convince him that everyone is controlled, protected, and pervaded by the Lord. By using the phrases *mayi* (within Me) and *sarva bhootani* (all beings - plural), the Lord is making it truly clear that He is supreme, and all beings act under His control. This is one of the core concepts of the philosophy of dualism of Sri Madhwacharya.

The Fire of Spiritual Knowledge Burns Ignorance and Sins

अपि चेदसि पापेभ्यः सर्वेभ्यः पापकृत्तमः ।
सर्वं ज्ञानप्लवेनैव वृजिनं सन्तरिष्यसि ॥ ३६ ॥
api ced asi pāpebhyaḥ sarvebhyaḥ pāpakṛttamaḥ
sarvaṁ jñānaplavenaiva vṛjinaṁ santariṣyasi

यथैधांसि समिद्धोऽग्निर्भस्मसात् कुरुतेऽर्जुन ।
ज्ञानाग्निः सर्वकर्माणि भस्मसात्कुरुते तथा ॥ ३७ ॥
yathaidhāṁsi samiddhognir bhasmasāt kuruterjuna
jñānāgniḥ sarvakarmāṇi bhasmasāt kurute tathā

न हि ज्ञानेन सदृशं पवित्रमिह विद्यते ।
तत् स्वयं योगसंसिद्धः कालेनाऽत्मनि विन्दति ॥ ३८ ॥
na hi jñānena sadṛśaṁ pavitram iha vidyate
tat svayaṁ yogasaṁsiddhaḥ kālenātmani vindati

Even if one has committed more sins than a very sinful person, one can navigate through worldly afflictions with the help of a boat known as divine, spiritual knowledge. (4.36)

Just as a blazing fire turns wood into ashes, the fire of knowledge burns off the ill effects of action. (4.37)

Nothing in this world is as pure as (spiritual) knowledge. One who is on the path of learning will, in due course of time, achieve self-realization. (4.38)

Comments: These three verses describe three major benefits from 'sacrifice of knowledge' -acquiring and acting on divine, spiritual knowledge (*jnana yagna*). In

verse (4.36), knowledge is compared to a boat. Just as one needs a boat to cross a river, similarly one needs proper knowledge to traverse the river of worldly afflictions. A boat does not row itself. It needs a sailor. Similarly, mere knowledge is not good enough. One needs a proper teacher and one must practice and act upon such knowledge. In verse (4.37), it is stated that the fire of knowledge burns off ill-effects of action just as a blazing fire turns wood into ashes. This implies that knowledge should be sharp, strong, and powerful, just like a blazing fire. Verse (4.38), categorically states that such knowledge is superior to everything else in this world and one must diligently pursue the path of learning to acquire this knowledge over time.

Sincerity, Sense Control, Spiritual Knowledge Lead to Liberation

श्रद्धावान् लभते ज्ञानं मत्परः संयतेन्द्रियः ।
ज्ञानं लब्ध्वा परां शान्तिम् अचिरेणाधिगच्छति ।। ३९ ।।
śraddhāvāṁl labhate jñānaṁ tatparaḥ saṁyatendriyaḥ
jñānaṁ labdhvā parāṁ śāntim acireṇādhigacchati

One who is sincerely pursuing the path of knowledge with sense organs completely under control and focusing on Me (the Lord) will attain spiritual knowledge and eventually attain eternal bliss. (4.39)

Comments: How does one obtain such knowledge? This verse answers by stating the three prerequisites that one must possess to achieve such superior knowledge – faith, self-control, and unswerving devotion to the Lord. One must note that all three of these prerequisites must be met.

अज्ञश्चाश्रद्दधानश्च संशयात्मा विनश्यति ।
नायं लोकोऽस्ति न परो न सुखं संशयात्मनः ॥ ४० ॥
ajñaś cāśraddadhānaś ca saṁśayātmā vinaśyati
nāyaṁ lokosti na paro na sukhaṁ saṁśayātmanaḥ

One who is ignorant, who is devoid of faith, and who is doubting will perish. One who doubts these teachings will not gain anything of value in this world or in other worlds and will never have peace of mind. (4.40)

Comments: This verse describes the opposite attributes to those in verse (4.39). It is known from experience that one who is insincere in efforts will not achieve anything of substance in this world even when it comes to worldly issues. One, who does not have conviction in spiritual principles, will not achieve anything of value in this world or afterlife.

योगसंन्यस्तकर्माणं ज्ञानसंछिन्नसंशयम् ।
आत्मवन्तं न कर्माणि निबध्नन्ति धनंजय ॥ ४१ ॥
yogasaṁnyastakarmāṇaṁ jñānasaṁchinnasaṁśayam
ātmavantaṁ na karmāṇi nibadhnanti dhanaṁjaya

O Dhananjaya (Arjuna)! One who performs prescribed duties as an offering to the Lord and has vanquished any lingering doubts with the sword of knowledge will not be entangled by any action. (4.41)

Comments: A seeker must perform prescribed duties without any expectations on the outcome and submit any fruits obtained back to the Lord Almighty. In addition, such a seeker should also focus on acquiring divine, spiritual knowledge which will help destroy any doubts

and develop deep conviction. Such a seeker will not be entangled by any activity and will achieve liberation. This verse categorically states that a seeker must perform *karma yoga* and *jnana yoga* along with *bhakti yoga* to achieve *moksha*.

तस्माद‍ज्ञानसंभूतं हृत्स्थं ज्ञानासिनाऽऽत्मनः ।
छित्त्वैनं संशयं योगम् आतिष्ठोत्तिष्ठ भारत ॥ ४२ ॥
tasmād ajñānasañbhūtaṁ hṛtsthaṁ jñānāsinātmanaḥ
chittvainaṁ saṁśayaṁ yogam ātiṣṭhottiṣṭha bhārata

Therefore, O Bharata! Using the sword of knowledge, cut asunder the layer of doubts caused due to ignorance enveloping your mind. Lift yourself up and get going on performing your *yoga*, i.e., the duty of fighting this just war. (4.42)

Comments: Arjuna had developed deep doubts about the need to fight the war based on his fears of losing near and dear ones. Lord Krishna concludes the discussion in this chapter (*jnana yoga*) by encouraging Arjuna to get rid of the doubts in his mind through proper knowledge and focus on his prescribed duty of waging the rightful war with proper conviction.

Summary of Chapter 4

In chapter 3, the Lord taught that one must perform one's prescribed duties without expectations. (*nishkama karma*). In this chapter, the Lord teaches more about the nature of activities (*karma*) of both the Lord and individual beings. In verses (4.1) to (4.3), the Lord says that He had taught this spiritual knowledge previously to

deities such as Surya etc. In response to Arjuna's question in (4.4) about the chronology of the Lord's current manifestation and those of other deities, the Lord provides details of His incarnations in (4.5) to (4.9) stating that He manifests of His own free will from time to time in order to protect righteousness and virtue in society and to destroy evil. In verse (4.13), the Lord discusses the creation of living beings based on one's innate nature, aptitude, and activities. In verse (4.14), the Lord states that He has no obligations and activities do not bind Him. He further states that one who clearly understands the distinction between the Supreme Soul and individual souls will not be entangled by actions. Categories and nature of activities are described in verses (4.16) to (4.33) which provide comparison of *nishkama karma* to other types of activities (*karma*), and details of the types of *nishkama karma* such as worship and sacrifice. Verses (4.16) to (4.18), compare the different types of activities – *karma* (right action), *vikarma* (prohibited action), and *akarma* (inaction). Verse (4.18) describes the two attributes of one who is considered to be performing one's duty perfectly– (i) such a person realizes that even when performing prescribed duties, the actual work is being enabled by the Lord Himself and (ii) when not actively performing duties, (ex: during sleeping, dreaming) activity such as breathing is enabled by the Lord. Such a wise person will derive full benefits from duties performed. In that sense verse (4.18) is a summary of this entire chapter. Five verses (4.19) – (4.23) describe the characteristics of such a wise person, which briefly are – pandit (highly knowledgeable), ever contented, detached, equanimous. That person would also have deep conviction in divine, spiritual knowledge. Verses (4.24) – (4.30) contain a

discussion on different types of sacrifices performed by seekers in their quest for self-realization and liberation. These verses emphatically state that Vedic sacrifice (*yagna*) not only refers to the symbolic acts of propitiating deities with fire rituals etc., but also refers to other selfless acts such as donating to charity, devotional worship to the Lord Almighty, spiritual education, self-control, self-discipline etc. The discussion on sacrifices is concluded in verse (4.32) where the Lord exhorts Arjuna to fight the just war to protect his citizens as that is his prescribed duty. Performing one's prescribed duty as an offering to the Lord is indeed a superior form of worshipping the Lord. In verse (4.33), the Lord teaches that action is complete only when it is accompanied by knowledge. In verses (4.36) to (4.38), the Lord describes the greatness of knowledge and in verse (4.39) outlines the attributes of a seeker searching for right knowledge. This chapter is concluded in verse (4.42), where Lord Krishna exhorts Arjuna to use knowledge (*jnana*) to get over any doubts he had about waging the war, and to focus on fighting the just war with conviction.

इति चतुर्थोऽध्यायः
End of Chapter 4

पञ्चमोऽध्यायः – कर्मसन्न्यासयोगः

Chapter 5 - The Path of Renunciation

Chapter Introduction: This chapter of 29 verses is known as *Sanyasa Yoga* (The Path of Renunciation). Renunciation of worldly pleasures is termed *sanyasa* and performing prescribed duties as an offering to the Lord is termed *yoga* (action). In this chapter, the Lord answers Arjuna's questions on fundamental aspects of these two concepts – *sanyasa* and *yoga*. Arjuna's argument would be that if renunciation were a better option than action, he could perhaps adopt the life of an ascetic and avoid waging the war. The Lord goes on to describe the characteristics of a renunciant and clarifies that one must incorporate both these paths to achieve self-realization. The Lord reiterates that Arjuna must focus on performing his prescribed duty of waging the war to protect his citizens from the evil Kauravas. This chapter also delves into the importance of detachment and the characteristics of seekers who have developed detachment from rewards through self-control.

Action or Renunciation? Which is Better?

अर्जुन उवाच ।
सन्न्यासं कर्मणां कृष्ण पुनर्योगं च शंससि ।
यच्छ्रेय एतयोरेकं तन्मे ब्रूहि सुनिश्चितम् ।। १ ।।

arjuna uvāca
saṁnyāsaṁ karmaṇāṁ kṛṣṇa punar yogaṁ ca śaṁsasi
yac chreya etayor ekaṁ tan me brūhi suniścitam

Arjuna said:

O Krishna! Sometimes you seem to praise the path of renunciation and other times you seem to praise the path of action. Please tell me clearly, which of the two is beneficial. (5.1)

Comments: In verse (2.48), the Lord clearly directs Arjuna to focus on his prescribed duties without expectations. This concept was expanded in Chapter 3 (*karma yoga*). In verse (4.22), from Chapter 4 (*jnana yoga*), the Lord stated that one must be equanimous in the face of happiness/sadness and be content with whatever is granted by Him. These two characteristics are described by '*yoga*' and '*sanyasa*'. If the latter is the better path, then Arjuna could conclude that he would be better off focusing on relinquishing all activities and developing equanimity and devotion to the Lord. He could then perhaps avoid participating in the destructive war.

Sri Rayaru in [GV] gives us a second interpretation, where the question is related to the comparison between ascetics and householders. Verse (4.41) can be interpreted as describing the attribute of a seeker who has relinquished all outcomes from actions and has taken on the role of an ascetic. Verse (4.42) directs that one must perform one's prescribed duties and hence can be interpreted as referring to a householder. So, Arjuna could also be enquiring about the comparison between an ascetic and a householder, and if the former were the better of the two, he could perhaps embrace ascetism and avoid the battle.

Action and Renunciation - Both required for Liberation

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

सन्न्यासः कर्मयोगश्च निःश्रेयसकरावुभौ ।

तयोस्तु कर्मसन्न्यासात् कर्मयोगो विशिष्यते ।। २ ।।

śrībhagavān uvāca
saṁnyāsaḥ karmayogas ca niḥśreyasakarāv ubhau
tayos tu karmasaṁnyāsāt karmayogo viśiṣyate

The Lord said:

Renunciation of worldly pleasures (*sanyasa*) and performing prescribed duties (*yoga*) are both necessary for one to achieve liberation. Performing prescribed action is better than merely renouncing worldly pleasures. (5.2)

Comments: The Lord categorically states that both– renunciation of worldly pleasures (*sanyasa*), and performing prescribed duties as an offering to Him (*karma yoga*) are necessary for one to achieve self-realization and liberation. One cannot conclude that only ascetics practice detachment and they do not have any obligations on action. Nor do householders only practice prescribed activities without practicing self-control. So, one cannot argue that *sanyasa* and *karma yoga* cannot co-exist in the same person. Lord Krishna recognizes Arjuna's motivation in this question and states that performing prescribed duties as an offering to the Lord (*karma yoga*) is superior to mere detachment, equanimity etc. (*sanyasa*), but both are required for achieving self-realization and ultimate liberation. Again, the Lord is impressing upon Arjuna that he must not avoid participating in his prescribed duty of fighting the just war.

ज्ञेयः स नित्यसन्न्यासी यो न द्वेष्टि न काङ्क्षति ।
निर्द्वंद्वो हि महाबाहो सुखं बन्धात् प्रमुच्यते ।। ३ ।।
jñeyaḥ sa nityasaṁnyāsī yo na dveṣṭi na kāṅkṣati
nirdvandvo hi mahābāho sukhaṁ bandhāt pramucyate

One who neither hates the unpleasant nor craves for the pleasant is a real renunciant. O Arjuna, The One with Mighty Arms!! One who has conquered dualities (such as hatred and desires) will be freed from bondage. (5.3)

Comments: This verse clarifies that renunciation is not an attribute of only ascetics. Sri Rayaru [GV] states that in verse (4.22), the Lord described the attributes of one who has renounced, but without using the term *sanyasa*. Here He clarifies that such a person is a *sanyasi* (renunciant). This is important because Arjuna, in his question in (5.1) had used the term *sanyasa*.

सांख्ययोगौ पृथग्बालाः प्रवदन्ति न पण्डिताः ।
एकमप्यास्थितः सम्यग् उभयोर्विन्दते फलम् ।। ४ ।।
sāṁkhyayogau pṛthag bālāḥ pravadanti na paṇḍitāḥ
ekam apy āsthitaḥ samyag ubhayor vindate phalam

Ignorant people say that the path of knowledge and the path of action (performed as an offering to the Lord without expectation of outcome) are different and are not causally related. Learned ones do not say that. Whichever path is properly followed, it will lead to the results obtainable from both the paths. (5.4)

Comments: The Lord clarifies that the paths of knowledge and action are not exclusive but are in fact causally related (i.e. complement each other). Some

scriptures such as the **Bhagavata Maha Purana** [BMP], in canto 11, chapter 21, state that those who focus only on ritualistic fire sacrifices will only end up with irritation in the eyes due to smoke (in other words they do not achieve anything of value). Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies that the reference in [BMP] is related to someone who performs ritualistic activities with expectations on rewards and without offering the fruits to the Lord. Such activities are pointless. In summary, both the paths of renunciation and action are complementing each other and result in a seeker achieving divine, spiritual knowledge.

यत्सांख्यैः प्राप्यते स्थानं तद्योगैरपि गम्यते ।
एकं सांख्यं च योगं च यः पश्यति स पश्यति ।। ५ ।।

yat sāṁkhyaiḥ prāpyate sthānaṁ tad yogair api gamyate
ekaṁ sāṁkhyaṁ ca yogaṁ ca yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati

Those following the path of action (performed as an offering to the Lord without expectations) and those following the path of knowledge (acquiring and disseminating spiritual knowledge) both reach the Lord's abode. The one who understands this is a true knower. (5.5)

Comments: The previous verse stated that both the paths of knowledge and action are important. How can one deduce that actions lead to knowledge? The Lord answers by stating that even those in the path of action do reach the His abode but through the path of divine, spiritual knowledge. These two paths are symbiotically related. Sri Rayaru in [GV] states a second interpretation of this verse as follows – The goal that is attained by a seeker who is an ascetic is also reachable by seekers who

are householders (non-ascetics). Ascetics who have renounced everything will also perform activities, and householders act based on knowledge acquired.

Mere Renunciation without Action Leads to Misery

सन्न्यासस्तु महाबाहो दुःखमाप्तुमयोगतः ।
योगयुक्तो मुनिर्ब्रह्म न चिरेणाधिगच्छति ॥ ६ ॥

saṁnyāsas tu mahābāho duḥkham āptum ayogataḥ
yogayukto munir brahma nacireṇādhigacchati

O Arjuna, One with Mighty Arms! Mere renunciation of worldly pleasures while abdicating prescribed duties leads to grief. One who performs prescribed action as an offering to the Lord while renouncing worldly pleasures will indeed reach the Lord. (5.6)

Comments: In this verse the Lord clarifies that mere renunciation of worldly pleasures while abdicating prescribed duties leads one to downfall. Developing detachment from rewards requires a lot of mental effort. Such efforts should not be wasted for temporary rewards. In addition to renouncing worldly pleasures, one must focus on performing one's prescribed duties as an offering to the Lord as this leads to liberation and lasting peace. On the other hand, a seeker who performs prescribed actions without attachment to the rewards, but as an offering to the Lord will indeed reach the Lord's abode. The goal of every action should be to please the Lord.

योगयुक्तो विशुद्धात्मा विजितात्मा जितेन्द्रियः ।
सर्वभूतात्मभूतात्मा कुर्वन्नपि न लिप्यते ॥ ७ ॥

yogayukto viśuddhātmā vijitātmā jitendriyaḥ
sarvabhūtātmabhūtātmā kurvann api na lipyate

One with a pure soul who is focused on the path of action with sincerity, with control over mind and sense organs, with firm conviction that the Lord of all beings is also one's Lord will not be tainted by the ill effects of any action. (5.7)

Comments: In verse (5.3), it was stated that a renunciant will not avoid unpleasant actions and will not crave for only pleasant activities. The first part of this verse states that the renunciant would have developed this conviction through the practice of self-control. The second part of this verse states that such a person will have achieved divine, spiritual knowledge as a secondary benefit which will then help in obtaining the primary benefit of *moksha*.

All Activities are Due to the Lord Alone

नैव किञ्चित् करोमीति युक्तो मन्येत तत्त्ववित् ।
पश्यन् शृण्वन्स्पृशन् जिघ्रन् अश्नन् गच्छन् स्वपन् श्वसन् ॥ ८ ॥

naiva kiṁcit karomīti yukto manyeta tattvavit
paśyañ śṛṇvan spṛśañ jighrann aśnan gacchan svapañ śvasan

प्रलपन् विसृजन् गृह्णन् उन्मिषन् निमिषन् अपि ।
इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेषु वर्तन्त इति धारयन् ॥ ९ ॥

pralapan visṛjan gṛhṇann unmiṣan nimiṣann api
indriyāṇīndriyārtheṣu vartanta iti dhārayan

During activities such as seeing, listening, touching, smelling, eating, moving, sleeping, breathing, talking,

excreting, holding, opening eyelids, closing eyelids, the sense organs are performing their activities propelled by the Lord. A seeker should understand that the Lord is independent, and no one can perform anything independently without the Lord's will. (5.8) (5.9)

Comments: Verses (5.3) – (5.7) described the attributes of a renunciant. These two verses describe the conviction behind those attributes. One who utterly understands that every action performed through one's physical body and mind takes place only because of the Lord's will is able to develop detachment from the rewards of any action. After all such a person knows that no one can perform any action independently, and in such a case no can one claim any rewards.

ब्रह्मण्याधाय कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा करोति यः ।
लिप्यते न स पापेन पद्मपत्रमिवाम्भसा ॥ १० ॥
brahmaṇy ādhāya karmāṇi saṅgaṁ tyaktvā karoti yaḥ
lipyate na sa pāpena padmapatram ivāmbhasā

The one who performs prescribed duties without expectations, as an offering to the Lord Himself, knowing that the Lord is the cause of all activities, will not be entangled by actions just as water does not cling to a lotus leaf. (5.10)

Comments: In verse (5.6), it was stated that a seeker needs both renunciation and action to achieve self-realization. In verse (5.7), it was stated that such a seeker will not be tainted by actions. This verse combines the concepts in these verses and categorically states that such a seeker will not be impacted by any sins accruing from actions and will obtain *moksha*. This verse identifies the

attributes of such a seeker who has incorporated both renunciation and action. Such a seeker –

1. will not claim ownership in activities.
2. has full conviction that the Lord causes all activities.
3. performs activities as a worship to the Lord.
4. is detached from any rewards from such actions.
5. offers any accrued rewards to the Lord.
6. is aware that the Lord has caused these activities for the benefit of the seeker.

Such a seeker is not impacted by any effects of such action, just as water does not cling to a lotus leaf. The comparison with the lotus is very apt. The lotus is hydrophobic as even when it is immersed in water, it does not hold water. Similarly, the seeker described here, even when immersed in worldly activities will not be tainted by any effects of such actions.

This verse has been appropriately identified by Sri Madinur Vishnu Teertha as a summary of chapter 5 in [BGS] as it truly summarizes the characteristics of a seeker whose spiritual journey incorporates both *karma* and *sanyasa*.

कायेन मनसा बुद्ध्या केवलैरिन्द्रियैरपि ।
योगिनः कर्म कुर्वन्ति सङ्गं त्यक्त्वाऽऽत्मशुद्धये ।। ११।।

kāyena manasā buddhyā kevalair indriyair api
yoginaḥ karma kurvanti saṅgaṁ tyaktvātmaśuddhaye

Virtuous seekers perform their prescribed duties with purity in their physical body, sense organs, mind, and intellect, without attachment and without expectations, to cleanse their minds. (5.11)

Comments: In previous verses (5-6) to (5-10) it was stated that a seeker needs to incorporate both renunciation and action to succeed in the path of self-realization. This verse clarifies that actions must be accompanied by purity in body, mind, intellect, and sense organs all of which are essential for any activity. Such a seeker can cleanse his mind. A pure mind can absorb divine, spiritual concepts easily, which then allows the seeker to perform prescribed activities without getting entangled by them.

युक्तः कर्मफलं त्यक्त्वा शान्तिमाप्नोति नैष्ठिकीम् ।
अयुक्तः कामकारेण फले सक्तो निबध्यते ।। १२ ।।
yuktaḥ karmaphalaṁ tyaktvā śāntim āpnoti naiṣṭhikīm
ayuktaḥ kāmakāreṇa phale sakto nibadhyate

A true *Yogi* (seeker) who performs prescribed duties without expectations on outcome, as an offering to the Lord and with a sense of duty, will achieve steady peace. One who merely longs for the fruits of actions stays imprisoned in worldly affairs. (5.12)

Comments: The previous verses (5-6) to (5-10) discussed the need to practice both renunciation and prescribed duties (action) to achieve eternal bliss (*moksha*). Are there other ways for one to achieve *moksha*? This verse clarifies that there are no other ways. These two paths are both necessary to achieve *moksha*. One who fails to practice either will develop obsession with

temporary, worldly rewards and will never be able to escape from the cycle of *samsara*.

सर्वकर्माणि मनसा सन्न्यस्याऽस्ते सुखं वशी ।
नवद्वारे पुरे देही नैव कुर्वन्न कारयन् ।। १३ ।।
sarvakarmāṇi manasā saṁnyasyāste sukhaṁ vaśī
navadvāre pure dehī naiva kurvan na kārayan

True happiness is experienced by those who completely surrender to the Lord and are convinced that no one performs any activity or gets any activity performed by others independently. Such seekers will experience inner bliss within their own selves - a city with nine doors. (5.13)

Comments: In verses (5-8) to (5-9), it was stated that a true seeker is aware that none of the actions performed by that seeker are independently performed. They are in fact performed by the Lord, using the seeker as an instrument. This verse clarifies that such a seeker also needs to be aware that the seeker also cannot cause those actions to be performed independently. The Lord is responsible for all activities which are performed by Him of His own free will. Such a seeker even when residing in a physical body having nine orifices (like nine doors to a city) will experience peace and will not be tainted by any activities.

Sri Vidyasagara Madhava Teertha gives an example of an episode in the **Mahabharata**, where the city of Dwaravati which had nine doors was compared to a human body which has nine orifices. When some indulge in prohibited activities such as gambling, the in-dwelling

Lord chooses not to protect them, just like Lord Krishna did not protect the Pandavas who lost their kingdom to the Kauravas in the game of dice.

Doership – Individual Souls and Lord Almighty

न कर्तृत्वं न कर्माणि लोकस्य सृजति प्रभुः ।
न कर्मफलसंयोगं स्वभावस्तु प्रवर्तते ॥ १४ ॥
na kartṛtvaṁ na karmāṇi lokasya sṛjati prabhuḥ
na karmaphalasaṁyogaṁ svabhāvas tu pravartate

नादत्ते कस्यचित् पापं न चैव सुकृतं विभुः ।
अज्ञानेनाऽवृतं ज्ञानं तेन मुह्यन्ति जन्तवः ॥ १५ ॥
nādatte kasyacit pāpaṁ na caiva sukṛtaṁ vibhuḥ
ajñānenāvṛtaṁ jñānaṁ tena muhyanti jantavaḥ

A living being cannot perform activities independently nor get activities performed by others nor achieve fruits from such actions nor get fruits for others independently. The ever-independent Lord is responsible for all these actions. (5.14)

Living beings cannot independently diminish sins nor claim credit for good deeds. Their knowledge is veiled by ignorance, and hence they are deluded. Being deluded, they cannot realize the Lord. (5.15)

Comments: Verses (5.8), (5.9) stated that living beings, when they interact with the external world (through actions such as seeing, talking) are not actually doing so on their own. These two verses provide more insight into the nature of actions as they relate to living beings. Sri Rayaru in [GV] provides two interpretations for these verses

depending on the attribution for the words '*prabhu*' in (5.14) and '*vibhu*' in (5.15), both of which mean the Lord. These two words can be either attributed to *jiva*, the individual soul (as it is superior to inert objects) as also to the Lord Almighty (who is the Lord of all).

Individual Souls: The first half of the verse (5.14) states that individual souls cannot act on their own nor can they cause action by someone else. How about the reward for actions performed, regardless of how they are performed? The second half of the verse (5.14) answers by stating that individuals also do not have independence on the issue of rewards. The first half of (5.15) states that individual souls do not accrue negative or positive effects of action on their own. If the Lord is responsible for all actions, why is it that no one can physically see the Lord? The second half of (5.15) states that individuals cannot see the Lord as they are covered by ignorance.

Lord Almighty: The Lord has not granted individuals, ability to act on their own. Likewise, the Lord has also not granted individuals, the liberty to claim rewards for their actions on their own. If the Lord is responsible for all actions of the individuals, will the Lord not be tainted by such actions? The first half of (5.15) states that the Lord is not tainted by actions of the individuals. The Lord provides individuals apparatus and facilities to act based on the individuals' innate nature to help them in their spiritual journey.

There are several questions that arise at this stage regarding the nature of actions related to an individual soul, inert objects, and the Lord. These questions are summarized as follows:

If an individual soul does not have independence in performing actions, how can that soul be held responsible for the consequences of such actions?

If the Lord Almighty is the one who is independent and is responsible for all actions performed by individual souls, how can the Lord be immune from the effects of such actions?

Sri Madhwacharya in his commentary on the **Brahma Sutras** [BSB] and in other works such as [GTN], adequately answers these questions. Firstly, one must understand the nature of attributes, doership (doer is an entity that performs some action) and independence as they relate to the three entities in the universe namely, individual souls, inert objects, and the Lord Almighty.

Attribute\ Entity	**Inert Objects**	**Individual Souls**	**Lord Almighty**
Doership	No	Yes	Yes
Independence	No	No	Yes

The Lord is independent in all aspects and has unlimited ability to perform activities independently. Hence, He has both doership and independence. Inert objects neither have ability to perform anything nor do they have independence. Individual souls do have doership but not independence, hence they have dependent doership. The relationship between the Lord, inert objects and living beings is illustrated with the example of a dairy farmer milking a cow through its udders in Sri Madhwacharya's [GTN 3-33]. All three entities are required in the task of extracting milk from a cow. The udder is akin to an inert

object. It cannot act, nor does it have any awareness or intent. The cow is a living being. It has awareness, it produces milk, it has an intention to give milk but it cannot independently extract milk from itself. The dairy farmer is like the Lord who uses the udder and extracts milk from the cow.

Armed with the above information, the two questions raised can be answered as follows:

1. Individual souls also have the quality of doership, but they are not independent. The Lord grants individuals the ability to perform activities based on their innate intent (*iccha*), attempt (*prayatna*) and knowledge (*jnana*). After all everyone has an intent to achieve liberation. The Lord recognizes this intent and grants the souls facilities such as a physical body, mind, intellect, sense organs to attain knowledge and perform prescribed duties. Even though individual souls do not have independence in action, they do have responsibility for their actions and hence are subject to dos and don'ts (*vidhi, nishedha*). The key here is the intent that is present in individual souls. This concept is clarified in **Brahma Sutra** (2.3.47).

2. The Lord is not tainted by actions performed by individual souls as the Lord merely grants them the ability to perform such actions. The Lord has nothing to gain by providing individual souls the facilities needed but does so out of pure compassion.

With the above information one can also resolve apparent conflicts in spiritual texts where in some texts

individual souls are described as not having the attribute of doership, while in other texts the individual souls are described as having the attribute of doership. The former is indicating that the doership is not independent and the latter is indicating that the doership is dependent.

ज्ञानेन तु तदज्ञानं येषां नाशितमात्मनः ।
तेषामादित्यवज्ज्ञानं प्रकाशयति तत्परम् ॥ १६ ॥
jñānena tu tad ajñānaṁ yeṣāṁ nāśitam ātmanaḥ
teṣām ādityavaj jñānaṁ prakāśayati tat param

For those whose ignorance is destroyed by proper knowledge about the Lord, that very knowledge will reveal to them the Supreme Lord like a brilliant sun. (5.16)

Comments: The previous verse (5.15) indicated that the limitations of individual beings are due to their knowledge being enveloped by ignorance. This verse clarifies how such ignorance can be overcome. If one's innate knowledge is covered by ignorance how can that person be convinced to perform prescribed duties (*yoga*) with detachment (*sanyasa*)? Sri Rayaru in [GV] explains that knowledge that is enveloped by ignorance is the innate knowledge (*swaroopa jnana*) that is specific to a soul. The ignorance can be removed by the seeker obtaining proper knowledge through scriptural studies and teachings from a Guru. This knowledge is termed '*paroksha*' (indirect). Thus, a seeker by obtaining *paroksha* knowledge can get rid of ignorance, perform prescribed duties with detachment and attain divine, spiritual (*aparoksha* or direct) knowledge and reach the Lord.

तद्बुद्धयस्तदात्मानस्तन्निष्ठास्तत्परायणाः ।
गच्छन्त्यपुनरावृत्तिं ज्ञाननिर्धूतकल्मषाः ।। १७ ।।
tadbuddhayas tadātmānas tanniṣṭhās tatparāyaṇāḥ
gacchanty apunarāvṛttiṁ jñānanirdhūtakalmaṣāḥ

One whose mind is firmly established in the Lord, who accepts the Lord as one's owner, who has unflinching faith in the Lord, and who has taken shelter in the Lord, will be rid of sins due to divine knowledge and will reach the abode of the Lord, never to return. (5.17)

Comments: Verse (5.16) stated that a seeker must acquire indirect knowledge through scriptural studies to destroy ignorance which leads to acquiring divine, spiritual knowledge eventually leading to *moksha*. This verse clarifies that one cannot expect to acquire direct knowledge (*aparoksha*) immediately after acquiring indirect knowledge. One must repeatedly study scriptures with the mind fully immersed in the Lord and ensure that the knowledge acquired is without any doubts and develop full conviction in such knowledge. This will allow a seeker to be prepared to absorb direct, divine, spiritual knowledge which leads the seeker to *moksha*.

The Learned See the Lord in All

विद्याविनयसम्पन्ने ब्राह्मणे गवि हस्तिनि ।
शुनि चैव श्वपाके च पण्डिताः समदर्शिनः ।। १८ ।।
vidyāvinayasaṁpanne brāhmaṇe gavi hastini
śuni caiva śvapāke ca paṇḍitāḥ samadarśinaḥ

Learned ones will see the Lord in all beings - in educated, pious people, in exalted scholars, in cows, in

elephants, in dogs, in cruel people who kill animals, and indeed in all. Such persons will see the same blemishless Lord of infinite auspicious attributes present in everyone. (5.18)

Comments: Previous verses (5.16) and (5.17) stated that a seeker must first acquire indirect knowledge through scriptural studies. When is a seeker considered to have obtained that knowledge? This verse states that a seeker who has successfully acquired indirect knowledge will know that the same Lord Almighty is present everywhere and in everyone. They will know the same blemishless Lord of infinite auspicious attributes as present in different species of animals.

इहैव तैर्जितः सर्गो येषां साम्ये स्थितं मनः ।
निर्दोषं हि समं ब्रह्म तस्माद् ब्रह्मणि ते स्थिताः ॥ १९॥
ihaiva tair jitaḥ sargo yeṣāṁ sāmye sthitaṁ manaḥ
nirdoṣaṁ hi samaṁ brahma tasmād brahmaṇi te sthitāḥ

One whose mind perceives the same Lord in everyone and everything will conquer worldly miseries in this current life itself. One who realizes the blemishless Lord as the same everywhere will indeed reach the Lord. (5.19)

Comments: The previous verse (5.18) referred to the Lord as '*sama*' without explicit mention. In this verse, it is clarified that the attribution '*sama*' is to the Lord only as evidenced by the adjective in the second line '*nirdosham*' (one who is devoid of any blemishes). Sri Rayaru explains this in [GV].

Equanimous Seekers Focus on the Lord

न प्रहृष्येत् प्रियं प्राप्य नोद्विजेत् प्राप्य चाप्रियम् ।
स्थिरबुद्धिरसंमूढो ब्रह्मविद् ब्रह्मणि स्थितः ।। २० ।।
na prahṛṣyet priyaṁ prāpya nodvijet prāpya cāpriyam
sthirabuddhir asaṁmūḍho brahmavid brahmaṇi sthitaḥ

A renunciant who is aware that the Lord is independent, should neither excessively rejoice during pleasurable times nor get depressed during periods of distress but maintain equanimity at all times. Such a person, realizing that living beings are not independently responsible for their conditions, will always be focused on the Lord. (5.20)

Comments: This verse describes additional attributes of seekers who have successfully acquired spiritual knowledge. Such seekers will exhibit equanimity in the presence of pleasure or pain. They are no longer enveloped by ignorance and are aware of the independent nature of Lord Almighty.

बाह्यस्पर्शेष्वसक्तात्मा विन्दत्यात्मनि यत्सुखम् ।
स ब्रह्मयोगयुक्तात्मा सुखमक्षयमश्नुते ।। २१ ।।
bāhyasparśeṣv asaktātmā vindaty ātmani yat sukham
sa brahmayogayuktātmā sukham akṣayam aśnute

One who has withdrawn from attachment to sense pleasures through external objects will experience inner bliss, although temporarily. Permanent bliss is experienced only through meditation by focusing the mind steadfastly on the Lord. (5.21)

Comments: Verse (5.6) stated that mere renunciation of worldly pleasures while abdicating actions is pointless.

However, one can argue that by practicing detachment in sense pleasures one can overcome desires and experience peace. In this case, why perform any specific activities? This verse states that any peace that is attained by withdrawal from attachment to sense pleasures is temporary. To experience unlimited bliss, one must also focus on performing activities such as meditation with the mind steadfastly focused on the Lord. This verse uses the term '*akshaya*' meaning unlimited in the second line. The procedure for meditation is described later in verse (5.27) and (5.28).

Sri Rayaru has a second interpretation for this verse as follows – A renunciant will experience some amount of bliss just by remembering the Lord. It goes without saying that when renunciation is coupled with deep meditation on the Lord, the seeker will be on the path to achieve *moksha* (unending bliss).

Yogis withdraw from Indulgence

ये हि संस्पर्शजा भोगा दुःखयोनय एव ते ।
आद्यन्तवन्तः कौन्तेय न तेषु रमते बुधः ।। २२ ।।
ye hi saṁsparśajā bhogā duḥkhayonaya eva te
ādyantavantaḥ kaunteya na teṣu ramate budhaḥ

O Arjuna, Son of Kunti! Know that temporary pleasures experienced through contact with sense organs are the reasons for misery. The wise do not seek to rejoice in them. (5.22)

Comments: Why do learned ones avoid indulging in pleasurable sense activities? This verse answers by stating that the learned ones are aware that such activities, while

they appear to bring pleasure in the short term, always end up in misery (for example, long term health effects of indulging in excessive sweet dishes). The reason for such misery is due to the transitory nature of pleasure experienced.

शक्नोतीहैव यः सोढुं प्राक् शरीरविमोक्षणात् ।
कामक्रोधोद्भवं वेगं स युक्तः स सुखी नरः ॥ २३ ॥

śaknotīhaiva yaḥ soḍhuṁ prāk śarīravimokṣaṇāt
kāmakrodhodbhavaṁ vegaṁ sa yuktaḥ sa sukhī naraḥ

One who can withstand the pressures from desire and anger in a current lifetime, before leaving one's body, is the real *yogi*. Such a person is indeed blissful. (5.23)

Comments: This verse urges a seeker to develop detachment from emotions such as desire, anger etc., in the current lifetime itself. Sri Rayaru clarifies in [GV] the importance for a seeker to develop such detachment in the current lifetime while the seeker has a human form. There is no guarantee that one will be reborn in human form. It is not easy for other living forms, such as animals to develop such detachment. Hence, one should not waste the opportunity that the Lord has provided in granting one a human form. Sri Padmanabha Teertha in his commentary **Gita Bhashya Bhava Pradeepika** [GBBP] clarifies that the use of the word '*nara*' (human) in this verse does not imply that only humans are eligible for bliss. Those who have attained *Brahma Loka* (the abode of Brahma) are also eligible for bliss as they do not have emotions of desire, anger etc. Sri Madhwacharya in his [GB] clarifies that one reaches *Brahma Loka* only after overcoming such emotions.

योऽन्तःसुखोऽन्तरारामस्तथाऽन्तर्ज्योतिरेव यः ।
स योगी ब्रह्मनिर्वाणं ब्रह्मभूतोऽधिगच्छति ॥ २४ ॥
yontaḥsukhontarārāmas tathāntarjyotir eva yaḥ
sa yogī brahmanirvāṇaṁ brahmabhūtodhigacchati

A *yogi* who has realized the futility of seeking pleasures from the external world will experience inner bliss and will realize Lord Almighty. Such a person who is truly knowledgeable about the true nature of the Lord will indeed reach the Lord's abode. (5.24)

Comments: The next few verses describe the nature of learned ones. They experience bliss on two counts. Firstly, by overcoming passions such as desire and aversion they feel liberated. Second, by focusing on the Lord in their mind, they experience inner bliss. They are focused only on the Lord and nothing else, indicated by use of the word *eva* (only) in the first line. The Lord here is described as '*anatarjyoti*' meaning the one who is self-effulgent.

लभन्ते ब्रह्मनिर्वाणम् ऋषयः क्षीणकल्मषाः ।
छिन्नद्वैधायतात्मानः सर्वभूतहिते रताः ॥ २५ ॥
labhante brahmanirvāṇam ṛṣayaḥ kṣīṇakalmaṣāḥ
chinnadvaidhā yatātmānaḥ sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ

Learned ones who have dispelled all doubts and ignorance, who wish good things for all beings, will be rid of sins, and will indeed reach the Lord. (5.25)

Comments: The previous verse stated that one who focuses on the Lord will achieve inner bliss. This verse further states that such a seeker who is rid of sins will rise above duality (such as joy/misery), exercise self-

control and will have strong conviction in spiritual knowledge. Such a conviction occurs once a seeker is devoid of any doubts or ignorance about spiritual issues.

कामक्रोधवियुक्तानां यतीनां यतचेतसाम् ।
अभितो ब्रह्मनिर्वाणं वर्तते विदितात्मनाम् ।। २६ ।।
kāmakrodhaviyuktānāṁ yatīnāṁ yatacetasām
abhito brahmanirvāṇaṁ vartate viditātmanām

For one who has achieved self-realization and through sincere efforts is able to control the mind and win over passions such as desire and anger, the Lord will be visible everywhere. (5.26)

Comments: This verse states that one who has achieved self-realization with self-control will not only experience inner bliss, but will also be able to visualize the Lord as the protector, always and everywhere.

Contours of Meditation

स्पर्शान् कृत्वा बहिर्बाह्यांश्चक्षुश्चैवान्तरे भ्रुवोः ।
प्राणापानौ समौ कृत्वा नासाभ्यन्तरचारिणौ ।। २७।।
sparśān kṛtvā bahir bāhyāṁś cakṣuś caivāntare bhruvoḥ
prāṇāpānau samau kṛtvā nāsābhyantaracāriṇau

यतेन्द्रियमनोबुद्धिर्मुनिर्मोक्षपरायणः ।
विगतेच्छाभयक्रोधो यः सदा मुक्त एव सः ।। २८ ।।
yatendriyamanobuddhirmunir mokṣaparāyaṇaḥ
vigatecchābhayakrodho yaḥ sadā mukta eva saḥ

One who has control over sense organs and has a steady mind, who focuses eyes in the area between the

eye brows or the edge of the nose, who controls the exhaling and inhaling breaths, who is not impacted by desire, fear and anger and who is focused steadfastly on achieving liberation, is indeed liberated in this very life. (5.27) (5.28)

Comments: Verse (5.21) indicated the need for meditation. These two verses describe the procedure for meditation on the Lord. Meditation involves three main steps. The first step is to withdraw sense organs from indulging in pursuing sensory pleasures. The second step is to control breathing by holding the breath steady after inhalation and exhalation. The third step is to focus the eyes on the region between the eyebrows or the edge of the nose. These steps help a seeker maintain physical and mental steadiness which allows the mind to concentrate on the Lord. Such a seeker is deemed to have achieved liberation in this very life. In other words, such a seeker will indeed achieve liberation hereafter.

भोक्तारं यज्ञतपसां सर्वलोकमहेश्वरम् ।
सुहृदं सर्वभूतानां ज्ञात्वा मां शान्तिमृच्छति ॥ २९ ॥
bhoktāraṁ yajñatapasāṁ sarvalokamaheśvaram
suhṛdaṁ sarvabhūtānāṁ jñātvā māṁ śāntim ṛcchati

One who meditates on Me and knows Me as the ultimate consumer of all sacrifices and rituals, as the Supreme Lord of the universe and as the well-wisher for all beings, will indeed reach Me and will be liberated. (5.29)

Comments: The previous two verses described the process of concentrated meditation on the Lord. The verse

describes the subject of such meditation, namely Lord Almighty.

Summary of Chapter 5

In chapter 3, the Lord taught that one must perform one's prescribed duties without expectations. (*nishkama karma*). In chapter 4, the Lord imparts knowledge (*jnana*) about the nature of activities (*karma*) of both the Lord and individual beings. In chapter 5, the Lord answers some fundamental questions from Arjuna (5.1) regarding the concepts of renunciation (*sanyasa*) and action (*karma*). It is apparent from Arjuna's question that if renunciation were a better option than action, he could perhaps adopt the life of an ascetic and avoid waging the war. The Lord answers (5.2) by stating that while both the paths of renunciation and action lead one to liberation, the path of action is superior. The Lord goes on to describe the characteristics of a renunciant (5.2) and clarifies that one must incorporate both these paths to achieve self-realization (5.6). An of quoted example is that of a person who is sick in the stomach due to an unhealthy diet. For such a person to heal it is important to both consume the medication prescribed by the doctor and at the same time avoid indulging in an unhealthy diet. By stating that the path of action is superior, the Lord is clarifying to Arjuna that he must participate in his prescribed duty of waging this war to protect his citizens while detaching himself from any outcomes of his actions. The Lord also clarifies that both ascetics and householders are equally eligible to attain salvation, based on their efforts. An ascetic who may have acquired divine, spiritual knowledge will still be involved in performing activities and likewise a

householder who is preoccupied in performing prescribed activities will also be involved in acquiring spiritual knowledge. Some scriptures downplay the role of actions such as ritual fire sacrifices which may only result in eye irritation due to smoke. It is clarified that any such description of action is related to actions that are performed with specific expectations. They do not apply to actions performed as an offering to the Lord without expectations (5.4). It is also clarified that one cannot achieve much by merely relinquishing the outcomes of actions while not offering them to the Lord. Any activity can be deemed as complete and useful only when such activities are performed with a pure mind and as an offering to the Lord with no material expectations (5.6). An ideal seeker is one who performs prescribed duties with detachment towards the rewards, performs activities while exercising control over sense organs and the mind, knows that the Lord is the one who is causing the action, is aware that the Lord Almighty is the Lord of everyone in the universe, performs activities with devotion and as a worship to the Lord. Such a seeker will not be tainted by any effects of actions just as water does not stick to a lotus leaf (5.10). One should realize that it is the Lord who makes it possible for one to perform any activity. The Lord activates all activities in the universe. However, the individual souls are responsible for the outcomes of their activities, even though they are enabled to act by the Lord. The individual soul has dependent doership and the Lord is the only independent doer. The Lord activates the intent and attempt of the individual souls, hence the individual souls are held responsible for the actions. The Lord is never tainted by any such actions as He has nothing to gain by any action but performs them out of pure compassion for

the individual souls (5-14, 5-15). The nature of knowledge in learned ones is described in verses (5.15) to (5.17). Knowledge is of two types, indirect and direct. The inherent knowledge in individual souls is masked by ignorance, and seekers get rid of this ignorance through spiritual studies, analysis, listening to lectures from teachers (indirect knowledge) etc. This paves the way for seekers to achieve self-realization (direct knowledge). Learned ones perceive the same blemishless Lord full of infinite auspicious attributes present in all living beings (5.18). Learned ones who have developed detachment from sense pleasure experience peace due to a sense of liberation, but everlasting bliss is only possible through meditation with the mind focused exclusively on the Lord (5.12). Learned ones avoid indulging in sense pleasures which are temporary and only lead to misery (5.22). The Lord exhorts one to develop control over sense organs and emotions such as desire, anger in one's current lifetime itself while one has a human form, as this will not be possible with other life forms (5.23). The procedure for performing concentrated meditation which was stated as a necessity in verse (5.21) is described in verses (5.27) and (5.28). The chapter is concluded in (5.29) which describe the characteristics of the Lord who is the goal of such meditation. A seeker who meditates on the Lord knowing the Lord as the consumer of all sacrifices and rituals, who is the Lord of all, and who is the well-wisher for everyone will indeed achieve liberation.

।। इति पञ्चमोऽध्यायः ।।

End of Chapter 5

षष्ठोऽध्यायः – आत्मसंयमयोगः
Chapter 6 - The Path of Self Restraint

Chapter Introduction: This chapter of 47 verses is termed *Atma Samyama Yoga* (The Path of Self Restraint) or *Dhyana Yoga* (The Path of Meditation). The previous chapters described the broad contours of the path of action (*karma yoga*) and the path of knowledge (*jnana yoga*). Further, the characteristics of a seeker who is on a journey to self-realization was broadly identified as one having detachment from outcomes of action (*sanyasa*) and performing prescribed duties (*yoga*) as an offering to the Lord. This was briefly described in verse (2.39). *Yoga* as described here prepares a seeker to learn more about the greatness of the Lord which is covered in detail in chapters 7 to 12. This chapter delves more into the details of *yoga* (action) and its components. *Yoga* has two components – external and internal. The external component of *yoga* refers to the prescribed activities that one must perform which are visible to others. For example, Arjuna waging the war to protect his citizens from the Kauravas' misrule. This aspect of yoga was briefly described in verse (2.45) and was expanded in chapters 3 to 5. The internal component of yoga is termed *dhyana yoga* (path of meditation), This is also an essential aspect of yoga and was briefly described in verse (5.27). This chapter delves into details of *dhyana yoga*. Characteristics of a true *yogi* are described. The physical aspects of meditation such as place, physical pose, breath control etc., are also described. Requirements for moderation in consumption are also discussed. To a question from Arjuna regarding the condition of those who make a sincere

attempt but are not able to successfully implement *karma* and *dhyana*, the Lord teaches that no sincere effort is a waste and such seekers will get additional opportunities to complete their spiritual journey.

The Ascetic and the Yogi

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
अनाश्रितः कर्मफलं कार्यं कर्म करोति यः ।
स सन्यासी च योगी च न निरग्निर्न चाक्रियः ॥ १ ॥

śrībhagavān uvāca
anāśritaḥ karmaphalaṁ kāryaṁ karma karoti yaḥ
sa saṁnyāsī ca yogī ca na niragnir na cākriyaḥ

The Lord said:

One who performs prescribed duties without expectations is both a real ascetic and a real *yogi*; not the one who has simply relinquished performing ritual fire sacrifices. (6.1).

Comments: As indicated before, this chapter delves into details of *dhyana yoga,* the internal component of *yoga* (path of action). When is a seeker eligible to follow the path of *dhyana* (meditation) which prepares one to learn about the qualities of the Lord? This verse states that a true seeker who has both detachment towards outcomes of actions and commitment to performing prescribed duties is ready and eligible for *dhyana yoga*.

Some schools such as *sankhya*, hold the view that ascetics who have relinquished ritual fire sacrifices are the only ones eligible for *dhyana yoga*. This verse clarifies

that even ascetics have obligations to perform sacrifices such as worship of the Lord, learning and preaching scriptures etc., as was stated in verse (4.25). Hence all seekers (including ascetics, householders) are eligible for *dhyana yoga* if they perform their prescribed duties without expectations.

यं सन्न्यासमिति प्राहुर्योगं तं विद्धि पाण्डव ।
न ह्यसन्न्यस्तसंकल्पो योगी भवति कश्चन ।। २ ।।

yam sannyāsam iti prāhuḥ yogam tam viddhi pāṇḍava
na hi asannyasta saṁkalpaḥ yogī bhavati kaścana

O Pandava (Arjuna)! Understand that relinquishing passions such as desire and anger (detachment) is an integral part of *karma yoga*. One who is performing activities without getting rid of desire is not a real *yogi*. (6.2)

Comments: Previous verses stated that a real seeker has both the characteristics of detachment from outcomes and commitment to performing prescribed activities which are broadly termed *sanyasa* and *yoga*. To emphasize the fact that these are not separate paths, this verse explicitly states that *sanyasa* as described here is an essential component of *yoga*.

आरुरुक्षोर्मुनेर्योगं कर्म कारणमुच्यते ।
योगारूढस्य तस्यैव शमः कारणमुच्यते ।। ३ ।।

āruruksor muner yogaṁ karma kāraṇam ucyate
yogārūḍhasya tasyaiva śamaḥ kāraṇam ucyate

For the one who has indirect knowledge (through scriptures) of the Lord, the path of achieving direct, divine

knowledge is through the path of action. One who has achieved direct knowledge of the Lord, through steadfast prayer and meditation, will experience exuberance in bliss upon liberation. (6.3)

Comments: Knowledge is of two types. Indirect knowledge (*paroksha jnana*) is the knowledge that a seeker acquires through study of scriptures, from listening to teachers etc. This knowledge helps the seeker to get rid of the ignorance that covers innate knowledge (verse 5.16). A seeker armed with such indirect knowledge, by practicing *sanyasa* and *yoga*, will be eligible for self-realization through direct, divine knowledge (*aparoksha jnana*). Will an *aparoksha jnani* indulge in activities and if so, what is to be gained? This verse builds upon the description in verse (3.20) and clarifies that an *aparoksha jnani* continues to perform activities to set an example to the society. Such actions are not wasted efforts but will result in increased exuberance in bliss upon liberation. There is another difference in duties performed by *paroksha* and *aparoksha jnanis*. The former needs to also engage in service to society to help those in need (just as one needs to pay taxes). The latter does not have such a broad mandate but needs to serve superior souls.

यदा हि नेन्द्रियार्थेषु न कर्मस्वनुषज्जते ।
सर्वसंकल्पसन्न्यासी योगारूढस्तदोच्यते ॥ ४ ॥
yadā hi nendriyārtheṣu na karmasv anuṣajjate
sarvasaṁkalpasaṁnyāsī yogārūḍhas tadocyate

One who is naturally disinterested in sense pleasures, has no attachment to actions, and performs actions only

as an offering to the Lord is said to have achieved direct knowledge of the Lord. (6.4)

Comments: This verse describes the characteristics of a realized soul (*aparoksha jnani*) who has attained direct, divine knowledge. Such a person is said to be naturally disinterested in sense pleasures and in rewards from actions. This is different from other seekers who are yet to reach this stage. These other seekers may also have developed aversion to sense pleasures, but such aversion does not come to them naturally. They must actively practice control of sense organs.

The Mind is a Friend and an Enemy

उद्धरेदात्मनाऽऽत्मानं नाऽत्मानमवसादयेत् ।
आत्मैव ह्यात्मनो बन्धुरात्मैव रिपुरात्मनः ॥ ५ ॥
uddhared ātmanātmānaṁ nātmānam avasādayet
ātmaiva hy ātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanaḥ

One should elevate oneself through the mind and should never fall into misery because of a weak mind. The mind is one’s friend and is also one’s enemy. (6.5)

Comments: The next few verses describe the role of the mind in a seeker’s evolution. The specialty of this verse is that it has 7 repetitions of the word ‘*atma*’. This is a remarkably interesting word in Sanskrit that has different meanings such as – self, Lord Almighty, mind, intellect, devotion etc. One can decipher the actual meaning only by looking at the context in which this word is used. The above translation interprets the 7 occurrences of *atma* as one, oneself, mind, mind, mind, one and mind.

Sri Rayaru [GV] provides an alternate meaning of this verse by interpreting *atma* as the Lord Almighty in some places. The Lord is one's friend and the Lord is also one's enemy. Hence, one must strive to earn the Lord's grace and one must avoid earning His wrath.

बन्धुरात्माऽऽत्मनस्तस्य येनात्मैवात्मना जितः ।
अनात्मनस्तु शत्रुत्वे वर्तेताऽत्मैव शत्रुवत् ॥ ६ ॥
bandhur ātmātmanas tasya yenātmaivātmanā jitaḥ
anātmanas tu śatrutve vartetātmaiva śatruvat

For one who wins over the mind with the intellect, the mind is indeed a friend. For one who cannot win over the mind, it becomes an enemy (the Lord becomes a friend to the devoted, and an enemy to those not devoted). (6.6)

Comments: This verse provides the reason for the mind to be someone's friend or enemy. For one who has developed control over the mind using the intellect, the mind is a friend. For such a seeker, the mind is a fertile ground for performing concentrated meditation on the Lord. For one who has no control over the mind, the mind itself becomes an enemy. So, the mind is like a key, which can be used to both lock and open a door.

A second interpretation as per Sri Rayaru in [GV] is as follows: For a seeker who has won over the Lord through devotion, the Lord becomes a friend. Those who are not devoted to the Lord will have the Lord as their enemy. In the above two interpretations the word '*atma*' has been translated as intellect and devotion, respectively.

जितात्मनः प्रशान्तस्य परमात्मा समाहितः ।
शीतोष्णसुखदुःखेषु तथा मानापमानयोः ॥ ७ ॥
jitātmanaḥ praśāntasya paramātmā samāhitaḥ
śītoṣṇasukhaduḥkheṣu tathā mānāpamānayoḥ

ज्ञानविज्ञानतृप्तात्मा कूटस्थो विजितेन्द्रियः ।
युक्त इत्युच्यते योगी समलोष्टाश्मकाञ्चनः ॥ ८ ॥
jñānavijñānatṛptātmā kūṭastho vijitendriyaḥ
yukta ity ucyate yogī sama loṣṭrāśmakāñcanaḥ

The Lord manifests in the heart of a seeker who has won over Him with devotion and control over the sense organs and the mind. Such a seeker will have attained both ordinary, indirect knowledge (though study of scriptures etc.) and special, direct, divine knowledge. This seeker is exemplified by contentment, detachment from sense pleasures, is equipoised when facing extreme conditions such as cold/heat, praise/insult, happiness/ sadness etc. The seeker also treats mud, stone, and gold equally and is indeed the real *yogi* (6.7) (6.8)

Comments: Previous verses indicated that the mind and the Lord Almighty can be both friends and enemies to a learned one who has won over both the mind (through intellect) and the Lord (through devotion). These two verses describe the effect felt by such a seeker. With the Lord manifesting in the heart of such a seeker (in other words through the grace of the Lord), the seeker will develop great patience and equanimity in the face of extreme cold/heat, praise/insult etc. By acquiring knowledge through spiritual studies (indirect knowledge), a seeker develops control over sense organs/mind and devotion to the Lord, which in turn allows the seeker to

win over the mind as well as the Lord. This allows the seeker to realize the Lord (direct knowledge), which in turn equips the seeker with equanimity in the face of extreme situations.

Equal Treatment

सुहृन्मित्रार्युदासीनमध्यस्थद्वेष्यबन्धुषु ।
साधुष्वपि च पापेषु समबुद्धिर्विशिष्यते ॥ ९ ॥

suhṛnmitrāryudāsīnamadhyasthadveṣyabandhuṣu
sādhuṣv api ca pāpeṣu samabuddhir viśiṣyate

Such a person treats everyone – well-wishers, friends, enemies, casual acquaintances, middlemen, the hateful, family along with virtuous people, and sinners equally. Equality is in the sense that the same blemishless Lord full of infinite auspicious attributes is indwelling in everyone. (6.9)

Comments: This verse continues to describe important attributes of a seeker who has achieved self-realization (with direct, divine knowledge). The population that one deals with daily is categorized into seven types-

* Well-wishers: Those who help others unconditionally
* Friends: Those who go out of their way to save others from danger
* Enemies: Those who always harm others
* Casual acquaintances: Those who neither help nor hurt.
* Middlemen: Those who help sometimes and harm sometimes

* Hateful: Those who hate others
* Family: Those who only help.

Everyone comes across these types of people daily and a real *yogi* treats them fairly and equally according to the guidelines in the scriptures. Equality is recognizing that the Lord indwelling in everyone is equally supreme with infinite auspicious attributes without blemish.

Procedure for Dhyana (Concentrated Meditation)

योगी युंजीत सततम् आत्मानं रहसि स्थितः ।

एकाकी यतचित्तात्मा निराशीरपरिग्रहः ॥ १० ॥

yogī yuñjīta satatam ātmānaṁ rahasi sthitaḥ
ekākī yatacittātmā nirāśīr aparigrahaḥ

Such a seeker controlling his sense organs and mind, detached from desires and consumption, prefers to be alone, with the mind fully focused on the Lord. (6.10)

Comments: In verse (5.27), the procedure for performing meditation was briefly discussed. The next few verses provide more details on meditation. To properly perform meditation, one must focus on three aspects, mental, physical, and respiratory. The most difficult aspect to control among these three is of course, the mental aspect. Hence, there has been more emphasis on the importance of controlling one's mind. A *yogi* engaged in meditation first finds a suitable, calm place to minimize distractions from the external world.

शुचौ देशे प्रतिष्ठाप्य स्थिरमासनमात्मनः ।

नात्युच्छ्रितं नातिनीचं चेलाजिनकुशोत्तरम् ॥ ११ ॥

śucau deśe pratiṣṭhāpya sthiram āsanam ātmanaḥ
nātyucchritaṁ nātinīcaṁ cailājinakuśottaram

तत्रैकाग्रं मनः कृत्वा यतचित्तेन्द्रियक्रियः ।
उपविश्यासने युंज्याद् योगमात्मविशुद्धये ॥ १२ ॥
tatraikāgraṁ manaḥ kṛtvā yatacittendriyakriyaḥ
upaviśyāsane yuñjyād yogam ātmaviśuddhaye

For meditation, a seeker should choose a clean place and make a firm seat which is neither too high nor too low. The seat should be made of three layers starting with *kusa* grass, soft animal skin and a clean, soft cloth on top. (6.11)

On this seat, the seeker should sit comfortably but firmly (with one of the *yoga* poses such as the lotus, the diamond etc.), with due control over body and mind, and start meditation on the Lord for self-purification. (6.12)

Comments: For concentrated meditation it is necessary to observe personal cleanliness and cleanliness of the environment. For one to ensure a clear mind and focus on the Lord Almighty, it is important to ensure physical cleanliness.

समं कायशिरोग्रीवं धारयन्नचलं स्थिरः ।
सम्प्रेक्ष्य नासिकाग्रं स्वं दिशश्चानवलोकयन् ॥ १३॥
samaṁ kāyaśirogrīvaṁ dhārayann acalaṁ sthiraḥ
saṁprekṣya nāsikāgraṁ svaṁ diśaś cānavalokayan

प्रशान्तात्मा विगतभीर्ब्रह्मचारिव्रते स्थितः ।
मनः संयम्य मच्चित्तो युक्त आसीत मत्परः ॥ १४ ॥

praśāntātmā vigatabhīr brahmacārivrate sthitaḥ
manaḥ saṁyamya maccitto yukta āsīta matparaḥ

The seeker should keep body, head, and neck in a straight line, sit firmly without the eyes wandering and focus the eyes on the tip of the nose and meditate on the Lord. (6.13)

With a clear, uncluttered mind, devoid of any fears from external elements, focusing the mind on the Lord, keeping the sense organs from straying, a seeker should meditate on Me (Lord Krishna) with firm conviction in My supremacy. (6.14)

Comments: After preparing the physical apparatus (space, seat etc.), the seeker is now to ready to start meditation, observing physical discipline by keeping body, head, and neck straight. It is also important to be free from fears from external elements such as wild animals when performing meditation. The Lord also says that the seeker should observe *brahmacharya* which some interpret as celibacy. However, meditation applies to all, not just the unmarried. So, the real interpretation of the *brahmachari* is *brahma* + *achara*, the one whose mind is active only on topics related to the Lord (*brahma*).

युंजन्नेवं सदाऽऽत्मानं योगी नियतमानसः ।
शान्तिं निर्वाणपरमां मत्संस्थामधिगच्छति ॥ १५ ॥

yuñjann evaṁ sadātmānaṁ yogī niyatamānasaḥ
śāntiṁ nirvāṇaparamāṁ matsaṁsthām adhigacchati

A seeker who meditates thus, with firm control on the mind, and complete focus on the Lord, will achieve eternal bliss after leaving the present body. (6.15)

Comments: This verse describes the benefit experienced by a seeker who performs concentrated meditation on the Lord, based on the procedures described previously. Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies that such a seeker will not just achieve the state of *jeevan mukti* (inner bliss experienced while alive) but will also achieve everlasting bliss in the company of the Lord in *moksha*.

Moderation in Consumption

नात्यश्नतस्तु योगोऽस्ति न चैकान्तमनश्नतः ।
न चातिस्वप्नशीलस्य जाग्रतो नैव चार्जुन ।। १६ ।।
nātyaśnatas tu yogosti na caikāntam anaśnataḥ
na cātisvapnaśīlasya jāgrato naiva cārjuna

युक्ताहारविहारस्य युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु ।
युक्तस्वप्नावबोधस्य योगो भवति दुःखहा ।। १७ ।।
yuktāhāravihārasya yuktaceṣṭasya karmasu
yuktasvapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkhahā

O Arjuna! One cannot achieve benefits of such meditation if one over eats or does not eat at all. Similarly, one who oversleeps or does not sleep at all, will also lose all benefits from meditation. (6.16)

One who wishes to benefit from such meditation should practice moderation in eating, relaxing, sleeping, and other daily activities. (6.17)

Comments: These two verses describe the requirements for physical wellbeing for a seeker to successfully perform concentrated meditation. It is important for a seeker to

ensure physical wellbeing by observing moderation in habits such as eating, sleeping etc. It is evident from practice that overeating leads to bodily discomfort. Similarly, oversleeping leads to laziness and lethargy. Neither of these conditions are conducive for meditation. Likewise, one should not unnecessarily indulge in difficult, strict fasting (as some do to reduce weight) as this can also have health consequences. Basically, one needs to observe moderation in eating and sleeping. However, those who are in good physical condition, should not avoid fasting on special days such as *Ekadashi*.

यदा विनियतं चित्तम् आत्मन्येवावतिष्ठते ।
निःस्पृहः सर्वकामेभ्यो युक्त इत्युच्यते तदा ॥ १८॥
yadā viniyataṁ cittam ātmany evāvatiṣṭhate
niḥspṛhaḥ sarvakāmebhyo yukta ity ucyate tadā

यथा दीपो निवातस्थो नेङ्गते सोपमा स्मृता ।
योगिनो यतचित्तस्य युंजतो योगमात्मनः ॥ १९ ॥
yathā dīpo nivātastho neṅgate sopamā smṛtā
yogino yatacittasya yuñjato yogam ātmanaḥ

When one can control sense organs and focus the mind on the Lord, one would achieve victory over desire and such a person is indeed the real *yogi*. (6.18)

The condition of a person, who can meditate on the Lord with complete control over the sense organs and the mind, is similar to that of a lamp glowing steadily in a windless place. (6.19)

Comments: One who is able to observe moderation in habits (6.16), (6.17), and implement the techniques of

meditation described in previous verses (6.11) – (6.14), will be in a position to control the sense organs, and the mind, and successfully meditate with the mind focused on the Lord. The state of a focused mind is compared to that of a lamp in a windless place where the lamp continues to glow steadily.

Characteristics of a Dhyana Yogi

यत्रोपरमते चित्तं निरुद्धं योगसेवया ।

यत्र चैवात्मनाऽऽत्मानं पश्यन्नात्मनि तुष्यति ॥ २० ॥

yatroparamate cittaṁ niruddhaṁ yogasevayā
yatra caivātmanātmānaṁ paśyann ātmani tuṣyati

सुखमात्यन्तिकं यत्तद् बुद्धिग्राह्यमतीन्द्रियम्।

वेत्ति यत्र न चैवायं स्थितश्चलति तत्त्वतः ॥ २१ ॥

sukham ātyantikaṁ yat tad buddhi grāhyam atīndriyam
vetti yatra na caivāyaṁ sthitaś calati tattvataḥ

यं लब्ध्वा चापरं लाभं मन्यते नाधिकं ततः ।

यस्मिन् स्थितो न दुःखेन गुरुणाऽपि विचाल्यते ॥ २२॥

yaṁ labdhvā cāparaṁ lābhaṁ manyate nādhikaṁ tataḥ
yasmin sthito na duḥkhena guruṇāpi vicālyate

तं विद्याद् दुःखसंयोगवियोगं योगसंज्ञितम् ।

स निश्चयेन योक्तव्यो योगोऽनिर्विण्णचेतसा ॥ २३॥

taṁ vidyād.h duḥkhasaṁyogaviyogaṁ yogasaṁjñitam
sa niścayena yoktavyo yogonirviṇṇacetasā

Practicing such meditation, one who has gained complete control over the mind, is able to see the Lord within oneself and experience bliss. (6.20)

One who has reached such a state will experience happiness beyond the reach of the sense organs that can only be comprehended by the intellect and will not lead the mind away from the Lord. (6.21)

One who experiences such happiness will not find anything more valuable and will not panic even in the most challenging situations. (6.22)

This path that frees one completely from misery is the real *yoga*. A seeker should practice such *yoga* with mental conviction detached from worldly pleasures. (6.23)

Comments: These 4 verses describe the experience of a *yogi* who is immersed in *dhyana* meditation. They are characterized as follows:

* the mind, which is under control, will not seek any outside material.
* the *yogi* experiences inner bliss by visualizing the Lord within.
* the *yogi* experiences a level of happiness that cannot be comprehended by sense organs.
* the mind is focused steadfastly on the Lord and does not stray.
* the *yogi* does not consider anything else as more valuable.
* the *yogi* is not impacted by worldly distress.

Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies that this state of meditation not only helps a seeker conquer any existing unhappiness but ensures that the seeker will not experience unhappiness in future also.

संकल्पप्रभवान् कामांस्त्यक्त्वा सर्वान् अशेषतः ।
मनसैवेन्द्रियग्रामं विनियम्य समन्ततः ॥ २४ ॥
saṅkalpaprabhavān kāmāṁs tyaktvā sarvān aśeṣataḥ
manasaivendriyagrāmaṁ viniyamya samantataḥ

शनैः शनैरुपरमेत् बुद्ध्या धृतिगृहीतया ।
आत्मसंस्थं मनः कृत्वा न किञ्चिदपि चिन्तयेत् ॥२५॥
śanaiḥ śanair uparamed buddhyā dhṛtigṛhītayā
ātmasaṁsthaṁ manaḥ kṛtvā na kiṁcid api cintayet

A seeker should resolve to completely renounce activities of sense pleasure and use the mind to control the sense organs completely. (6.24)

A seeker should strive to bring the mind gradually under the firm control of the intellect. Having controlled the mind, one should focus attention on the Lord to the exclusion of all external thoughts, refrain from chasing sense pleasures, and tightly control the sense organs. (6.25)

Comments: The first action that a seeker must undertake is to make a resolution to completely renounce indulging in sense pleasures. A seeker who is serious about traversing the path to liberation should take this first step. After all, it is common even in worldly life for someone desirous of achieving somethings to start by making a mental resolution to reach that goal. The Lord recognizes that it is almost impossible for one to withdraw the mind away from sense pleasure instantly. Hence, the advice to implement the process gradually, in steps.

Mental Tranquility

यतो यतो निश्चरति मनश्चञ्चलमस्थिरम् ।
ततस्ततो नियम्यैतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥ २६ ॥
yato yato niścarati manaś cañcalam asthiram
tatas tato niyamyaitad ātmany eva vaśaṁ nayet

The mind, by nature, is always wandering. As and when the mind starts straying into worldly matters, the seeker should forcibly bring the mind back to focus on the Lord. (6.26)

Comments: This verse continues the discussion on mind control. The mind is ever wandering. The mind also cannot be empty. One way to ensure that the mind is not filled with worldly matters is to forcibly focus and fill the mind with issues related to the Lord. This ensures that the mind will gradually focus on the Lord and move away from worldly matters.

प्रशान्तमनसं ह्येनं योगिनं सुखमुत्तमम् ।
उपैति शान्तरजसं ब्रह्मभूतमकल्मषम् ॥ २७ ॥
praśāntamanasaṁ hy enaṁ yoginaṁ sukham uttamam
upaiti śāntarajasaṁ brahmabhūtam akalmaṣam

High level of happiness will accrue to a *yogi* who has a tranquil mind devoid of passionate qualities (such as obsession and aversion), and who is focused on the Lord. This is a well-known fact. (6.27)

Comments: This verse states that the advantage of *dhyana* meditation is achievement of superior happiness. A tranquil mind focused on the Lord can protect itself

from the impacts of passionate qualities in nature that lead to hatred, desire etc. This verse uses the word *hi* which means well-known. The implication is that this concept is supported by scriptural texts such as the **Vedas**.

युंजन् एवं सदाऽऽत्मानं योगी विगतकल्मषः ।
सुखेन ब्रह्मसंस्पर्शमत्यन्तं सुखमश्नुते ॥ २८ ॥
yuñjann evaṁ sadātmānaṁ yogī vigatakalmaṣaḥ
sukhena brahmasaṁsparśam atyantaṁ sukham aśnute

In this manner, a seeker who is constantly focused on the Lord, and is free from vices (such as hatred and desire) will experience the company of Lord and will effortlessly experience bliss. (6.28)

Comments: The previous verse explained that a yogi focused on *dhyana* meditation will experience extreme happiness. This verse describes that happiness as the highest bliss that one experiences in the company of the Lord.

सर्वभूतस्थमात्मानं सर्वभूतानि चात्मनि ।
ईक्षते योगयुक्तात्मा सर्वत्र समदर्शनः ॥ २९ ॥
sarvabhūtastham ātmānaṁ sarvabhūtāni cātmani
īkṣate yogayuktātmā sarvatra samadarśanaḥ

Such a seeker is able to visualize the Lord in all beings and see all beings under the control of Lord the Almighty. Such a seeker has the realization that the all-pervading Lord present in all beings is equal in infinite, auspicious attributes. (6.29)

Comments: This verse describes the aspects of Lord Almighty as visualized by a *yogi* practicing *dhyana* meditation. Verse (5.29) and (6.14) described some aspects of Lord Almighty and this verse describes additional attributes in the context of a *dhyana yogi*.

Rewards from Dhyana

यो मां पश्यति सर्वत्र सर्वं च मयि पश्यति ।
तस्याहं न प्रणश्यामि स च मे न प्रणश्यति ।। ३० ।।
yo māṁ paśyati sarvatra sarvaṁ ca mayi paśyati
tasyāhaṁ na praṇaśyāmi sa ca me na praṇaśyati

One who sees Me (Lord Krishna) everywhere and who sees everything in Me will never lose Me and I will never be lost to that person. (6.30)

Comments: This verse states the special benefit accruing to a seeker who performs *dhyana* meditation using the procedures described previously. Such a seeker will see the Lord residing in everyone and everything and will also know the Lord as the controller of everything in the universe. The Lord will take care of such a seeker who will always be devoted to Him.

सर्वभूतस्थितं यो मां भजत्येकत्वमास्थितः ।
सर्वथा वर्तमानोऽपि स योगी मयि वर्तते ।। ३१ ।।
sarvabhūtasthitaṁ yo māṁ bhajaty ekatvam āsthitaḥ
sarvathā vartamānopi sa yogī mayi vartate

Seekers who see only My presence in all beings and worship Me as such will ultimately reach My abode

regardless of their conditions or state of being during their lifetime. (6.31)

Comments: This verse discusses additional benefits from *dhyana* meditation. A seeker performing such meditation with conviction about the Lord's presence in everyone will achieve *moksha* regardless of whether the seeker has taken a just or an unjust path. Sri Rayaru clarifies in [GV] that in the latter case, the quantity of bliss experienced in *moksha* will be reduced. Why do some realized souls take an unjust path? Many times, as in the case of Bharata and Ajamila, realized souls indulged in undesirable activities (a result of past action) due to the will of the Lord. But they were eventually shown the proper path by the Lord and ultimately achieved *moksha*. They would however experience a reduction in bliss in *moksha.*

Sri Padmanabha Teertha in his Gita commentary [GBBP], makes a reference to verse (3.17) where a realized soul destined for *moksha* has no obligations to perform any activities. Such a seeker will also eventually reach the Lord even if that seeker had not performed any activities.

आत्मौपम्येन सर्वत्र समं पश्यति योऽर्जुन ।
सुखं वा यदि वा दुःखं स योगी परमो मतः ॥ ३२॥
ātmaupamyena sarvatra samaṁ paśyati yorjuna
sukhaṁ vā yadi vā duḥkhaṁ sa yogī paramo mataḥ

O Arjuna! One who wishes for others, the same that is wished for oneself (presence of happiness and absence of sadness) and sees the same Lord in everyone is indeed a superior *yogi*. (6.32)

Comments: In this verse the Lord describes the characteristics of a *yogi* who is superior to others. Such a seeker will wish for others what the seeker would have wished for himself/herself and would see the same Lord in everyone. Does it mean that the *yogi* will treat or consider everyone as equal? No. Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies. The word *sama* or equal refers to the same Lord that is present in everyone as indicated by the phrase '*ekatvam asthita*' in the previous verse. The same Lord is present in everyone with infinite auspicious attributes while being devoid of any blemishes.

How to Tame a Wavering Mind?

अर्जुन उवाच ।
योऽयं योगस्त्वया प्रोक्तः साम्येन मधुसूदन ।
एतस्याहं न पश्यामि चञ्चलत्वात् स्थितिं स्थिराम् ।। ३३ ।।
arjuna uvāca
yaḥ ayam yogaḥ tvayā proktaḥ sāmyena madhusūdana
etasya aham na paśyāmi cañcalatvāt sthitim sthirām

चञ्चलं हि मनः कृष्ण प्रमाथि बलवद् दृढम् ।
तस्याहं निग्रहं मन्ये वायोरिव सुदुष्करम् ।। ३४ ।।
cañcalaṁ hi manaḥ kṛṣṇa pramāthi balavad dṛḍham
tasyāhaṁ nigrahaṁ manye vāyor iva suduṣkaram

Arjuna said:

O Madhusoodana! I cannot see how the mind, which by nature is fickle, can be focused steadfastly on meditation. (6.33)

O Krishna! The mind is always wavering, it is turbulent, it is strong and obstinate. It can corrupt one's body and sense organs. It is my view that trying to control the mind is extremely difficult, just like catching the wind. (6.34)

Comments: Arjuna, after listening to Krishna's teachings on *dhyana* meditation expresses doubts about the ability of the mind to meditate with full focus. The mind, by nature is fickle and is always wavering. The mind is extraordinarily strong, and many times forces one's body and sense organs astray. How can one control such a mind? It would be like trying to capture the wind? These are natural questions that would arise in a seeker.

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम् ।
अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ।। ३५ ।।
śrībhagavān uvāca
asañśayaṁ mahābāho mano durnigrahaṁ calam
abhyāsena tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa ca gṛhyate

असंयतात्मना योगो दुष्प्राप इति मे मतिः ।
वश्यात्मना तु यतता शक्योऽवाप्तुमुपायतः ।। ३६ ।।
asaṁyatātmanā yogo duṣprāpa iti me matiḥ
vaśyātmanā tu yatatā śakyovāptum upāyataḥ

The Lord said:

O Arjuna, One with Strong Arms! No doubt it is exceedingly difficult to control the wavering mind. O Son of Kunti! It can be controlled by practice (of *dhyana* meditation) and detachment (from sense pleasures). (6.35)

One who cannot achieve control over the mind can never benefit from meditation. One should strive to achieve mind-control through continuous practice, focus and concentrated meditation. (6.36)

Comments: In these two verses, the Lord prescribes two ways for one to achieve control over the mind. One would be to keep practicing *dhyana* meditation and the other would be to develop detachment from sense pleasures. Both these are not easy to achieve but one must strive to continuously practice and over time one will be able to control one's mind. It is evident from one's experience that one interested in learning any skill in life such as sports or music, must continuously practice and never give up. We see many examples of high achievers who have excelled in their chosen profession by sheer grit, determination, and constant practice. The same qualities when applied to meditation and detachment will help one develop control over one's mind.

One can question as to why one would need to develop detachment by avoiding indulgence in sensual pleasures as one can wait for such time till all desires are exhausted. Sri Jaya Teertha in [PD] uses the example of a wayward, drunk elephant which naturally becomes tame with exhaustion. But this is not true of sense organs. It is impossible to satiate sense organs by mere consumption. For example, one who craves good food and consumes it in excess may temporarily feel satisfied and in fact may refuse more food due to exhaustion. However, this feeling does not last, and the craving comes back the next day. So, one must continuously practice detachment to achieve control over one's mind.

Fate of Unsuccessful but Sincere Seekers

अर्जुन उवाच ।

अयतिः श्रद्धयोपेतो योगाच्चलितमानसः ।

अप्राप्य योगसंसिद्धिं कां गतिं कृष्ण गच्छति।। ३७।।

arjuna uvāca
ayatiḥ śraddhayopeto yogāc calitamānasaḥ
aprāpya yogasaṁsiddhiṁ kāṁ gatiṁ kṛṣṇa gacchati

कच्चिन्नोभयविभ्रष्टश्छिन्नाभ्रमिव नश्यति ।

अप्रतिष्ठो महाबाहो विमूढो ब्रह्मणः पथि ।। ३८ ।।

kacchin nobhayavibhraṣṭaś chinnābhram iva naśyati
apratiṣṭho mahābāho vimūḍho brahmaṇaḥ pathi

एतन्मे संशयं कृष्ण छेत्तुमर्हस्यशेषतः ।

त्वदन्यः संशयस्यास्य छेत्ता न ह्युपपद्यते ।। ३९ ।।

etan me saṁśayaṁ kṛṣṇa chettum arhasy aśeṣataḥ
tvadanyaḥ saṁśayasyāsya chettā na hy upapadyate

Arjuna said:

O Krishna! What happens to someone who attempts to traverse the spiritual path with sincerity but is unable to succeed due to failure in controlling the wandering mind? (6.37)

O Krishna, One with Mighty Arms! Will the efforts of that person be dissipated like a cloud scattered by high winds and will that person be banished and turned away from heavens and superior worlds? (6.38)

O Krishna! You should completely dispel my doubts. There is no one else who can answer these questions. (6.39)

Comments: Arjuna continues his questions to Krishna on the aspect of mind control. He realizes that many who are very sincere in their efforts to traverse the spiritual path cannot achieve detachment even after trying. What would happen to them, and are their efforts wasted? It appears, that they would be denied the heavens and *moksha* because of their failure to complete their prescribed duties or *dhyana* meditation. Or they would have achieved nothing of value in this life or after life. Will they wither away like clouds scattered by a strong wind or will they be relegated to hell? Arjuna, who had previously requested Krishna to help dispel his doubts in verses (2.7) and (3.2) again begs Him for guidance.

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
पार्थ नैवेह नामुत्र विनाशस्तस्य विद्यते ।
न हि कल्याणकृत् कश्चिद्दुर्गतिं तात गच्छति ॥ ४० ॥
śrībhagavān uvāca
pārtha naiveha nāmutra vināśas tasya vidyate
na hi kalyāṇakṛt kaścid durgatiṁ tāta gacchati

The Lord said:

O Partha! Such a sincere person will not experience any ill effects in this world or the next. One who indulges in even limited virtuous activities will never experience downfall. (6.40)

Comments: The Lord answers Arjuna's questions in the next four and half verses. Arjuna's questions were based on the following arguments. Some seekers may avoid performing activities that would result in rewards such as heavens, based on their belief that those rewards are temporary. Given the difficulty in performing

concentrated meditation on the Lord, they would also fail in *dhyana* meditation and would not be able to achieve liberation. So, they would lose out on both. Lord Krishna answers in verse (6.40) stating that a seeker who has tried to perform prescribed activities, meditation etc., will not experience any ill effects either in this world or hereafter. They will not be denied birth in human species. And they will indeed not be relegated to hell. Even limited but sincere efforts will save such seekers from downfall.

प्राप्य पुण्यकृतान् लोकान् उषित्वा शाश्वतीः समाः ।
शुचीनां श्रीमतां गेहे योगभ्रष्टोऽभिजायते ।। ४१ ।।
prāpya puṇyakṛtāṁ lokān uṣitvā śāśvatīḥ samāḥ
śucīnāṁ śrīmatāṁ gehe yogabhraṣṭobhijāyate

अथवा योगिनामेव कुले भवति धीमताम् ।
एतद्धि दुर्लभतरं लोके जन्म यदीदृशम् ।। ४२ ।।
athavā yogināṁ eva kule bhavati dhīmatām
etad dhi durlabhataraṁ loke janma yad īdṛśam

Such a person who was engaged in many virtuous acts in his/her lifetime, although imperfectly, will reach the heavenly world hereafter and will be reborn, in due course, in a pious and prosperous family. (6.41)

Or such a person could be reborn in a family of learned *yogis* (seekers on the path of self-realization). Although, it is extremely difficult and rare to get such births. (6.42)

Comments: Such seekers who have made sincere attempts at performing their prescribed duties and have not succeeded in perfectly completing *dhyana* meditation will receive additional opportunities for fulfillment in

future births. They could be reborn in advantageous circumstances such as in pious, prosperous families or families of learned *yogis*. It is rare for someone to get such opportunities. Those who are blessed to be born in such circumstances will have the right environment for scriptural learnings and will also be in the company of pious, learned teachers which will surely help them in their spiritual journey.

तत्र तं बुद्धिसंयोगं लभते पौर्वदेहिकम् ।

यतते च ततो भूयः संसिद्धौ कुरुनन्दन ।। ४३ ।।

tatra taṁ buddhisaṁyogaṁ labhate paurvadehikam
yatate ca tato bhūyaḥ saṁsiddhau kurunandana

पूर्वाभ्यासेन तेनैव ह्रियते ह्यवशोऽपि सः ।

जिज्ञासुरपि योगस्य शब्दब्रह्मातिवर्तते ।। ४४ ।।

pūrvābhyāsena tenaiva hriyate hy avaśopi saḥ
jijñāsur api yogasya śabdabrahmātivartate

O Kuru Nandana (Arjuna, Scion of the Kuru dynasty)! In this new birth, the seeker can continue on the spiritual journey started in previous births with more perfection and finally achieve self-realization. (6.43)

Based on practice gained in previous births, the seeker can focus the mind effortlessly on meditation, will be rid of sins, and will ultimately achieve liberation. (6.44)

Comments: The Lord explains the activities of a *yogi* who is reborn. Such a seeker who was not able to complete a spiritual journey in a previous birth, being born in advantageous circumstances is able to continue the spiritual journey and perform *dhyana* with more precision, finally leading to liberation. Even those seekers who are

not inclined to perform focused *dhyana* meditation will find themselves on that path, out of habit from previous births.

प्रयत्नाद् यतमानस्तु योगी संशुद्धकिल्बिषः ।
अनेकजन्मसंसिद्धस्ततो याति परां गतिम् ॥ ४५ ॥

prayatnād yatamānas tu yogī saṁśuddhakilbiṣaḥ
anekajanmasaṁsiddhas tato yāti parāṁ gatim

A seeker who, over many births, makes a sincere attempt to traverse the spiritual path will be rid of sins and will reach the Lord's abode. (6.45)

Comments: In this verse, the Lord clarifies that a seeker who is desirous of achieving *moksha* will continue to make sincere attempts on the spiritual path and will eventually be rid of sins and reach His abode. It must be noted that mere intention to perform prescribed activities and *dhyana* meditation are not enough. That intention must be followed by sincere attempts at execution.

तपस्विभ्योऽधिको योगी ज्ञानिभ्योऽपि मतोऽधिकः ।
कर्मिभ्यश्चाधिको योगी तस्माद् योगी भवार्जुन ॥ ४६॥

tapasvibhyodhiko yogī jñānibhyopi matodhikaḥ
karmibhyaś cādhiko yogī tasmād yogī bhavārjuna

One who is on the path of intense meditation on the Lord is superior to the one who practices strict penance. Such a seeker is also superior to one who has attained (indirect) spiritual knowledge and superior also to one focused on performing only ritualistic activities. O Arjuna! Immerse yourself in such intense meditation on the Lord. (6.46)

Comments: In this verse, the Lord extolls the virtues of *dhyana* yoga. Performing concentrated meditation on the Lord, being fully aware of the Lord's infinite auspicious attributes devoid of blemishes, and performing prescribed activities only as an offering the Lord without expectations is the most superior path for a seeker to attain the Lord.

The Superior Yogi

योगिनामपि सर्वेषां मद्गतेनान्तरात्मना ।
श्रद्धावान् भजते यो मां स मे युक्ततमो मतः ॥ ४७ ॥
yogināṃ api sarveṣāṁ madgatenāntarātmanā
śraddhāvān bhajate yo māṁ sa me yuktatamo mataḥ

A seeker who performs such *dhyana yoga* with devotion to the Lord is superior. The one who performs such *yoga* by serving the Lord is more superior and the one who performs such *yoga* with devotion, service and without any expectations is the most superior among all such seekers. (6.47)

Comments: The Lord concludes the teaching on *dhyana* yoga meditation by describing the relative gradations among seekers who perform such *yoga.* Some perform their prescribed activities and exercise concentrated meditation on the Lord. When such meditation is combined with devotion to the Lord (and is not done just mechanically), such efforts are considered superior by the Lord. Seekers who go a step further and offer their service to the Lord are even more superior. Finally, seekers who perform prescribed duties with devotion, with their minds fully immersed in the Lord and also serve the Lord without

any expectation is considered by Lord Krishna to be the most superior among all seekers.

Given that the purpose of this chapter is to teach the path of *dhyana* (meditation), this last verse fully summarizes the core concepts in this chapter with lucid explanation by the Lord on the nature of seekers who are on this path. Hence, it is considered the summary verse by Sri Madinur Vishnu Teertha in his [BGS].

Summary of Chapter 6

The previous chapters described the paths of action and knowledge (*karma yoga*, *jnana yoga*). *Yoga* has two components – external and internal. The external component of *yoga* refers to the prescribed activities that one performs which are visible to others. The internal component of yoga is termed *dhyana yoga* (path of meditation), This chapter delves into details of *dhyana yoga*. This chapter is also known as *atma samyama yoga* (or the Path of Self-Restraint). The Lord starts by stating that a real *yogi* is one who relinquishes expectations from actions and not one who merely gives up ritual fire sacrifices (6.1). Such a seeker also has societal obligations to help the underprivileged (6.3). A seeker must exercise control over the sense organs and the mind. The importance of the mind which can be both a friend and a foe to a seeker are explained in verses (6.5 – 6.8). A *yogi* sees the Lord equally in everyone. The process of meditation in terms of location, physical pose etc., are described in verses (6.10 – 6.14). Successful meditation also requires

moderation in activities such as eating, sleeping etc. (6.16-6.17). Verses (6.20-6.23) describe the nature of inner bliss experienced by a *yogi* during *dhyana* meditation. The requirement for controlling the sense organs and the mind for successful meditation are described in verses (6.24-6.32). Arjuna expresses the difficulty one would face in controlling the mind in verses (6.33-6.34), and Lord Krishna describes the solution for mind control in verses (6.35-6.36). In verses (6.37-6.39), Arjuna enquires about the fate of those seekers who may sincerely approach the spiritual path but are not able to execute it for various reasons. In verses (6.40-6.45), the Lord assures that no sincere efforts are wasted, and the seeker will get additional opportunities for self-realization in future births. In verse (6.47), the Lord concludes the teachings in this chapter by stating that among all seekers who practice *dhyana* meditation, the most superior are those who perform their prescribed activities with devotion to the Lord, without expectations, and as a service to the Him.

।। इति षष्ठोऽध्यायः ।।

End of Chapter 6

सप्तमोऽध्यायः – ज्ञानविज्ञानयोगः
Chapter 7 - The Path of Knowledge and Wisdom

Chapter Introduction: In this chapter of 30 verses, the Lord teaches the concepts of *jnana* (knowledge) and *vijnana* (special knowledge or wisdom). In verse (2.39), the Lord stated that He would teach about the *yoga* (way/path) to achieve divine, spiritual knowledge, knowing which one would be able to properly perform prescribed duties, get rid of accrued sins and achieve liberation. Such procedures were described from chapters 2 to 6. The path described had two components, external and internal. The external component dealt with the procedures performed that were evident to others and this was covered till chapter 5. Chapter 6 dealt with the internal procedure of *dhyana* meditation that a seeker needs to perform. Thus, the first 6 chapters were broadly concerned with descriptions of the methods and procedures (both external and internal) a seeker would need to perform to be able to acquire divine, spiritual knowledge. The next 6 chapters describe in more detail such divine, spiritual knowledge about the Lord Almighty which forms the principle message of the **Gita**. In earlier chapters 2 – 6, there were some discussions on the Lord's attributes which were included contextually, but the next 6 chapters provide more, exclusive details about the Lord's attributes. The term *jnana* in general means ordinary knowledge, which is acquired through study of scriptures, learning from teachers etc. This is also known as *paroksha jnana* (indirect knowledge) as one acquires this before attaining self-realization. *Vijnana* is specialized knowledge or wisdom acquired after self-realization. This is also known

as *aparoksha jnana* (direct knowledge). This chapter provides a detailed discussion of these two types of knowledge. The two types of knowledge are specifically about the Lord Almighty.

Discourse on Divinity

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
मय्यासक्तमनाः पार्थ योगं युंजन् मदाश्रयः ।
असंशयं समग्रं मां यथा ज्ञास्यसि तच्छृणु ॥ १ ॥
śrībhagavān uvāca
mayy āsaktamanāḥ pārtha yogaṁ yuñjan madāśrayaḥ
asaṁśayaṁ samagraṁ māṁ yathā jñāsyasi tac chṛṇu

The Lord said:

O Partha! With your mind fully absorbed in Me, seeking refuge in Me, meditate on Me. Listen to Me to understand the way (*yoga*) you can extensively know Me, dispelling all doubts. (7.1)

Comments: The Lord starts His sermon to Arjuna about His attributes. To understand these, seekers would require their minds to be completely focused on the Lord with firm conviction that the Lord is the protector and shelter for all. The Lord uses the adjectives *asamshayam* (without doubt) and *samagram* (complete) in this verse. Sri Madhwacharya in his [GB] clarifies that these words cannot be interpreted to conclude that one can completely understand the Lord. Rather they refer to the knowledge that a seeker can acquire, meaning that by listening to the Lord's teachings attentively, a seeker can understand the Lord's attributes to the maximum extent (based on the

seeker's abilities). Even deities such as Rudra, Brahma etc., cannot completely comprehend the Lord's attributes which are infinite.

ज्ञानं तेऽहं सविज्ञानमिदं वक्ष्याम्यशेषतः ।
यज्ज्ञात्वा नेह भूयोऽन्यज्ज्ञातव्यमवशिष्यते ॥ २ ॥
jñānaṁ tehaṁ savijñānam idaṁ vakṣyāmy aśeṣataḥ
yaj jñātvā neha bhūyo.anyaj jñātavyam avaśiṣyate

I will impart to you in full the spiritual knowledge (indirect knowledge – *paroksha jnana*) and wisdom (direct knowledge – *aparoksha jnana*) about Me knowing which there will be nothing else to know. (7.2)

Comments: The Lord states the two types of knowledge that He would be imparting. *Jnana* refers to ordinary or indirect knowledge (*paroksha jnana*) which one normally acquires through studies of scriptures, learning from teachers etc. *Vijnana = vishesha jnana* refers to specialized knowledge which refers to the direct knowledge (*aparoksha jnana*) that one would acquire after having been blessed with a vision of the Lord.

Knowledge is not easily Attainable

मनुष्याणां सहस्रेषु कश्चिद् यतति सिद्धये ।
यततामपि सिद्धानां कश्चिन्मां वेत्ति तत्त्वतः ॥ ३ ॥
manuṣyāṇāṁ sahasreṣu kaścid yatati siddhaye
yatatām api siddhānāṁ kaścin māṁ vetti tattvataḥ

One in a thousand will strive to gain spiritual knowledge. Among them, very few will succeed in gaining spiritual knowledge, and among these even fewer will understand Me properly. (7.3)

Comments: Among the masses, only very few will have the inclination to learn about the Lord, and among them even fewer will succeed in gaining some knowledge. Among those who have learnt something, very few would have properly learnt about the Lord's attributes. Again, it should be noted that knowing properly about the Lord's attributes does not equate to knowing fully about the Lord. One can learn properly only about a fraction of the Lord's attributes.

Eight-Fold Nature

भूमिरापोऽनलो वायुः खं मनो बुद्धिरेव च ।
अहंकार इतीयं मे भिन्ना प्रकृतिरष्टधा ।। ४ ।।

bhūmir āponalo vāyuḥ khaṁ mano buddhir eva ca
ahaṁkāra itīyaṁ me bhinnā prakṛtir aṣṭadhā

Earth, water, fire, wind, space, mind, intellect, and individuation are the eight different parts of inert nature that are under My control. (7.4)

Comments: In verse (7.2), the Lord resolves to teach Arjuna ordinary knowledge (*jnana)* first, and later specialized, divine knowledge (*vijnana*). That teaching starts from this verse onwards. Previously, in verse (5.29) and others, it was stated that the Lord is the Lord of everyone and everything in the universe. The next few verses provide more details on the components of the universe which are all under the control of the Lord. This verse explicitly states that inert nature which is made up of the basic elements (earth, fire, water, wind, space) and the principles of mind, individuation, and intellect are all under the control of the Lord. Sri Rayaru clarifies in [GV],

quoting from [GB] that the principle of individuation (*ahankara*) also includes the superior principle of cosmic intelligence (*mahat)*.

अपरेयमितस्त्वन्यां प्रकृतिं विद्धि मे पराम् ।
जीवभूतां महाबाहो ययेदं धार्यते जगत् ॥ ५ ॥
apareyam itas tvanyāṁ prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parām
jīvabhūtāṁ mahābāho yayedaṁ dhāryate jagat

O Arjuna, One with Mighty Arms! These eight divisions of inert nature are in the lower aspect of nature. Different from, and superior to inert nature and all living beings is Mother Nature (Goddess Mahalakshmi) who provides shelter to all and supports the entire universe. The Lord is superior to Goddess Mahalakshmi and all liberated souls who have achieved *moksha*. (7.5)

Comments: In the previous verse (7.4), the Lord described the components of inert nature and indicated that they all act under His control. In this verse, He identifies other, sentient components of the universe such as individual souls, liberated souls, and the ever-liberated Goddess Mahalakshmi, and clarifies that they too are under His control.

एतद्योनीनि भूतानि सर्वाणीत्युपधारय ।
अहं कृत्स्नस्य जगतः प्रभवः प्रलयस्तथा ॥ ६ ॥
etadyonīni bhūtāni sarvāṇīty upadhāraya
ahaṁ kṛtsnasya jagataḥ prabhavaḥ pralayas tathā

All living beings are born from inert nature and sentient nature. Through these two aspects of nature I am responsible for the creation and dissolution of the universe. (7.6)

Comments: The universe is made up of inert matter and sentient nature. Lord Krishna further clarifies that not only are the components of the universe under His control, but He is also responsible for the creation and dissolution of the universe. The Lord states '*aham prabhavaha pralayaha'* which literally means 'I am creation and dissolution'. Sri Rayaru in [GV] quoting Sri Madhwacharya's [GB] clarifies that the actual meaning of this phrase is 'I am responsible for creation and dissolution' stating that the phrase is used in a figurative sense. For example, it is common for many to refer to a kingdom by the name of its king. This is done in the context of a king who has full control over his kingdom.

The Lord is Supreme

मत्तः परतरं नान्यत् किञ्चिदस्ति धनंजय ।
मयि सर्वमिदं प्रोतं सूत्रे मणिगणा इव ॥ ७ ॥

mattaḥ parataraṁ nānyat kiṁcid asti dhanaṁjaya
mayi sarvam idaṁ protaṁ sūtre maṇigaṇā iva

O Dhananjaya! There is no entity in this universe that is superior to Me (Lord Krishna). Everything in the universe is supported by Me, just like a garland of pearls is supported by a string. (7.7)

Comments: This verse is one of the most quoted verses in the **Gita** as it emphatically captures the Lord's declaration that He is the Supreme One, and everything and everyone in the universe are under His control – in other words, the principle of Vishnu's Supremacy (*Vishnu Sarvottamatva*). While the Lord had indicated that everything in the universe acts under His control and He

is responsible for the universe's creation and dissolution, He clarifies that there is no one superior to Him and He is also responsible for the sustenance of the universe. Any confusion that some may have that perhaps *Maya* (or illusion) covers even the Lord, is categorically dispelled here.

It is interesting to note the simile of a bunch of pearls supported by a string is used here to describe the Lord supporting the universe. While one can see pearls worn by someone, the string is not visible. But if the string were to snap, the pearls will not hold together. Similarly, while the Lord supports the universe, one cannot see Him. He indeed works in mysterious ways.

Author's Note: This is also an interesting verse from the perspective of numerology. Number 7 is considered very auspicious and **Gita** has 700 verses. The fact that the Lord's supremacy is demonstrated in the 7th verse of the 7th chapter is worth noting.

रसोऽहमप्सु कौन्तेय प्रभाऽस्मि शशिसूर्ययोः ।
प्रणवः सर्ववेदेषु शब्दः खे पौरुषं नृषु ॥ ८ ॥
raso.aham apsu kaunteya prabhāsmi śaśisūryayoḥ
praṇavaḥ sarvavedeṣu śabdaḥ khe pauruṣaṁ nṛṣu

O Son of Kunti! I am the sweetness in water. I am the radiance in the Sun and the Moon. I am the primordial syllable *Om* in the **Vedas**. I am the sound in space. I am virility in humans. (7.8)

Comments: In verse (7.2), the Lord resolved to teach Arjuna both indirect (ordinary) knowledge (*jnana)* and direct (special, divine) knowledge (*vijnana*). Some aspects

of indirect knowledge were covered in verses (7.4) – (7.7). In the next few verses, the Lord provides more specialized details about His attributes and glories which form specialized knowledge (*vijnana*). In verses (7.4) – (7.7), the Lord states that everything and everyone in the universe act under His ownership and control. In the next few verses, He provides more details about the meaning of ownership. The basic elements of nature such as water, fire etc., are under His control, and in addition, the Lord owns and powers the essence in these elements. The Lord provides the character of sweetness to water; hence He is known as sweetness. Likewise, He powers the radiance in the Sun and the Moon. He is also known as *Om*, the primordial syllable which is the root for all Vedic literature. The syllable *Om* is made up of 3 letters; *a*, *u*, and *ma*, and these gave rise to the triumvirate in the holy hymn, **Gayatri** which in turn gave rise to the 3 parts of the **Purusha Sookta** hymns from the **Vedas**, from which arose Vedic literature. The Lord also empowers virility in humans.

पुण्यो गन्धः पृथिव्यां च तेजश्चास्मि विभावसौ ।
जीवनं सर्वभूतेषु तपश्चास्मि तपस्विषु ॥ ९ ॥

puṇyo gandhaḥ pṛthivyāṁ ca tejaś cāsmi vibhāvasau
jīvanaṁ sarvabhūteṣu tapa cāsmi tapasviṣu

I am the fragrance in earth. I am the brilliance in fire. I am the life in living beings. I am the austerity in ascetics. (7.9)

Comments: The Lord causes and consumes the pleasant fragrance in earthly material. The reason for the use of the adjective pleasant is to clarify that earthly materials

emanate different smells and the Lord consumes only pleasant fragrance. Fire has both radiance and energy. In the previous verse, it was stated that the Lord is responsible for the radiance in luminous objects such as the Sun, the Moon and Fire. Here He is confirming that even the energy in these objects are due to Him alone. The Lord has special affection for ascetics who are constantly meditating on Him. He states that He powers the austerity in ascetics.

बीजं मां सर्वभूतानां विद्धि पार्थ सनातनम् ।
बुद्धिर्बुद्धिमतामस्मि तेजस्तेजस्विनामहम् ।। १० ।।
bījaṁ māṁ sarvabhūtānāṁ viddhi pārtha sanātanam
buddhir buddhimatām asmi tejas tejasvinām aham

Know that I am the eternal seed and the root cause for the existence of all beings. Intelligence in the intelligent is due to Me. Strength in the powerful is due to Me (The Lord is the root cause not only for all beings but also for the strength and qualities in them). (7.10)

Comments: The Lord has stated previously that all objects in the universe such as the five basic elements of nature, the Sun, the Moon etc., are all under His control. In addition, He has separately clarified in verses (7.8) onwards, that not only are all objects under His control, their innate attributes (such as sweetness in water, radiance/energy in fire) are also due to Him alone. A tailor designs a dress using basic materials such as cloth, thread etc., and the finished dress has all characteristics of its ingredients such as softness, strength etc. The tailor gets the credit for creating the dress, but he has no role in the presence of the innate qualities of the ingredients.

The Lord is not like the tailor in this example. He not only is responsible for the creation of objects but is also responsible for the innate qualities in those objects. These aspects form part of *vijnana* which is specialized knowledge about the Lord's greatness. A seeker needs to understand this and only then will he be able to develop trust and faith in worshipping the Lord. Sri Rayaru in [GV] also interprets this verse to indicate that even deities who govern the intrinsic attributes of objects are under the Lord's control.

बलं बलवतां चाहं कामरागविवर्जितम् ।
धर्माविरुद्धो भूतेषु कामोऽस्मि भरतर्षभ ।। ११ ।।
balaṁ balavatāṁ cāhaṁ kāmarāgavivarjitam
dharmāviruddho bhūteṣu kāmo.asmi bharatarṣabha

I am the strength in powerful people who are devoid of passions such as lust, anger, and attachment. I am the desire in beings not contradicting *dharma* or virtue. (7.11)

Comments: The Lord who is devoid of any defects or weaknesses represents the positive attributes in individuals such as strength in powerful people who do not use such strength for negative purposes. One should visualize and worship the Lord as represented by the positive aspects and attributes of objects.

ये चैव सात्त्विका भावा राजसास्तामसाश्च ये ।
मत्त एवेति तान् विद्धि न त्वहं तेषु ते मयि ।। १२ ।।
ye caiva sātvikā bhāvā rājasās tāmasāś ca ye
matta eveti tān viddhi na tv ahaṁ teṣu te mayi

All entities defined by pious (*sattv*), or passionate (*rajas*) or ignorant (*tamas*) qualities are powered and

controlled by Me. I am not dependent on them, but they all depend on Me. (7.12)

Comments: In verses (7.8) – (7.11), the Lord stated that He is the essence of all objects, and identified by way examples, sweetness in water, radiance in fire, the primordial symbol Om in the scriptures, intelligence in the wise, strength in the powerful etc. On the surface, these verses seem to indicate the Lord's identity with these attributes. While these attributes were created by and act under the control of the Lord, they are not identical with the Lord. This verse clarifies this relationship by clearly stating that all objects in the universe comprised of the triumvirate of attributes (*sattv, rajas, tamas*) are under His control. The Lord further states that He is not dependent on them and rather, they all depend on Him, thus making it abundantly clear that these objects and attributes are not identical to Him but in fact owe their existence to Him.

Ignorance – Causes, Effect, and Solution

त्रिभिर्गुणमयैर्भावैरेभिः सर्वमिदं जगत् ।
मोहितं नाभिजानाति मामेभ्यः परमव्ययम् ।। १३ ।।

tribhir guṇamayair bhāvair ebhiḥ sarvam idaṁ jagat
mohitaṁ nābhijānāti mām ebhyaḥ param avyayam

Deluded by the influence of the three qualities of nature, the world fails to recognize Me as the supreme (*param*) and immutable (*avyayam*) being. (7.13)

Comments: How can the world made up of the three qualities come under delusion and not realize the Lord as being beyond the three qualities? Sri Rayaru in [GV]

explains that people look at other people in the world whose physical bodies are made up of the three qualities. They conclude that similarly, the Lord's body could also be made up of these three qualities. However, learned ones understand that the Lord's body is transcendental in nature and is not subject to birth or decay or destruction. The Lord who has limitless auspicious attributes is beyond the three qualities of nature. This concept is also part of *vijnana* (specialized knowledge about the Lord).

While the Lord, during His incarnation in this world as Rama or Krishna, looks and acts like any other human being, from time to time He also demonstrates extraordinary powers (far and beyond any human's capacity) which are described in epics such as the **Mahabharata**. Hence, a seeker will be able to understand the Lord's superiority by hearing about His glories.

दैवी ह्येषा गुणमयी मम माया दुरत्यया ।
मामेव ये प्रपद्यन्ते मायामेतां तरन्ति ते ।। १४ ।।

daivī hy eṣā guṇamayī mama māyā duratyayā
mām eva ye prapadyante māyām etāṁ taranti te

Maya (the divine illusion), the governing deity for these three qualities is under My control. No one can overcome this illusion. Only those who take shelter in Me can cross this illusion. (7.14)

Comments: What causes delusion in people? This verse answers by stating that delusion is due to the influence of the three qualities of *sattv*, *rajas* and *tamas* and they are caused by Nature presided over by Goddess Durga (as per Sri Rayaru [GV]). How can one overcome

such delusion? As Maya operates under the control of the Lord, one must surrender to the Lord to be freed from delusion.

न मां दुष्कृतिनो मूढाः प्रपद्यन्ते नराधमाः ।
माययाऽपहृतज्ञाना आसुरं भावमाश्रिताः ।। १५ ।।

na māṁ duṣkṛtino mūḍhāḥ prapadyante narādhamāḥ
māyayāpahṛtajñānā āsuraṁ bhāvam āśritāḥ

Ignorant, sinful individuals deprived of proper knowledge caused by delusion represent the worst of humanity. They are demoniac in nature and hence do not surrender to Me. (7.15)

Comments: In the previous verse, the Lord stated that one can overcome delusion by taking shelter in Him. If so, why isn't everyone following this advice? The Lord responds by stating that individuals who by nature are ignorant and sinful are not able to overcome delusion which prevents them from acquiring proper knowledge about Him. They have a demoniac nature and hence do not surrender to Him and are not able to overcome delusion.

Types of the Lord's Devotees

चतुर्विधा भजन्ते मां जनाः सुकृतिनोऽर्जुन ।
आर्तो जिज्ञासुरर्थार्थी ज्ञानी च भरतर्षभ ।। १६ ।।

caturvidhā bhajante māṁ janāḥ sukṛtinorjuna
ārto jijñāsur arthārthī jñānī ca bharatarṣabha

O Arjuna, Superior among Bharatas! Four types of virtuous people worship Me (Krishna). Those in distress

(afflicted by diseases), those seeking spiritual knowledge, those seeking riches and the learned ones (who have already acquired spiritual knowledge). (7.16)

Comments: The previous verse described sinful people who do not surrender to the Lord. This verse describes the categories of people who are devoted to the Lord. These largely consist of those who have some physical ailment, those who are seeking material wealth, those who are desirous of spiritual knowledge and those who have acquired divine, spiritual knowledge. The Lord's devotees who pray to the Lord in times of distress do so as they would like to continue performing their prescribed duty as an offering to Him and this would require them to be freed from distress. Devotees who pray for wealth do so to help them acquire the means to perform activities pleasing the Lord such as charity. Learned ones pray for self-realization.

तेषां ज्ञानी नित्ययुक्त एकभक्तिर्विशिष्यते ।
प्रियो हि ज्ञानिनोऽत्यर्थम् अहं स च मम प्रियः ॥ १७॥

teṣāṁ jñānī nityayukta ekabhaktir viśiṣyate
priyo hi jñāninotyartham ahaṁ sa ca mama priyaḥ

Among these four types, learned ones who know Me as the Supreme One and are exclusively devoted to Me, are the most superior. They are very fond of Me and I am very fond of them. (7.17)

Comments: Among these four types of devotees, is there a gradation? The Lord states that among these types, learned ones who have acquired divine, spiritual knowledge are the most superior. They have two main characteristics–

(a) their minds are exclusively focused on the Lord, and (b) they are exclusively devoted to the Lord. The Lord declares that such devotees are fond of Him and He is fond of them.

उदाराः सर्व एवैते ज्ञानी त्वात्मैव मे मतम् ।
आस्थितः स हि युक्तात्मा मामेवानुत्तमां गतिम् ।। १८ ।।
udārāḥ sarva evaite jñānī tv ātmaiva me matam
āsthitaḥ sa hi yuktātmā mām evānuttamāṁ gatim

All these four types of people are certainly worthy. But learned ones are like My own form. They surrender to Me completely and constantly meditate on Me and eventually reach the highest state of bliss. (7.18)

Comments: If learned ones are superior among the four and the Lord is fond of them, how about the other types? The Lord states that all four types are superior devotees, but among them learned ones are the most superior.

This verse uses the phrase '*atma eva*' when describing the learned ones. Some philosophers interpret '*atma eva*' to mean 'My own form' quoting the text '*nama roopevihaya*' from the **Atharva Upanishat (6.8)** in reference to rivers merging in an ocean and apparently losing their identity. Sri Vidyasagara Madhava Teertha quotes Sri Madhwacharya's interpretation of this Upanishat and points out that the proper word derivation of the above text is '*nama roope*S*avihaya*' = *nama roope avihaya*, which indicates that rivers maintain their identity even when they merge with the ocean. The proper interpretation of the phrase '*atma eva*' is that the learned ones are extremely dear to the Lord.

बहूनां जन्मनामन्ते ज्ञानवान् मां प्रपद्यते ।

वासुदेवः सर्वमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः ।। १९ ।।

bahūnāṁ janmanām ante jñānavān māṁ prapadyate
vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ

Such learned ones, based on their efforts over many births, acquire the true knowledge that Lord Vasudeva (Krishna), the Supreme One, is complete in all respects and is the true owner of the universe. They ultimately reach My abode. It is extremely rare to find such a person in this world. (7.19)

Comments: Why will everyone not reach *moksha*? This verse answers by stating that only those who attain true understanding of the Lord Almighty will reach His abode. Not everyone is convinced of the Lord's attributes. Learned ones, over many births perform their prescribed duties without expectations of rewards, with devotion to the Lord. Through studies, learning etc., they attain true knowledge about the Lord's attributes such as the Lord's ownership of the universe and His completeness. They eventually reach His abode. Such learned people are rare.

Worshippers of Other Deities

कामैस्तैस्तैर्हृतज्ञानाः प्रपद्यन्तेऽन्यदेवताः ।

तं तं नियममास्थाय प्रकृत्या नियताः स्वया ।। २० ।।

kāmais tais tair hṛtajñānāḥ prapadyantenyadevatāḥ
taṁ taṁ niyamam āsthāya prakṛtyā niyatāḥ svayā

Many in this world, devoid of true divine knowledge due to their obsession with worldly riches, perform stipulated rituals as per their innate nature and propitiate other, lesser deities. (7.20)

Comments: In the previous verse, it was stated that learned people with true, divine knowledge are rare in this world. However, one does see many religious people in the world. So, how can the learned be considered rare? This verse answers by stating that not everyone worships the Lord without expectations on rewards. Many people in the world, who are drawn to material riches perform religious rituals as stipulated in the scriptures to propitiate and please lesser deities. They do this based on their innate nature and are unable to attain proper, divine knowledge.

यो यो यां यां तनुं भक्तः श्रद्धयाऽर्चितुमिच्छति ।
तस्य तस्याचलां श्रद्धां तामेव विदधाम्यहम् ॥ २१॥
yo yo yāṁ yāṁ tanuṁ bhaktaḥ śraddhayārcitum icchati
tasya tasyācalāṁ śraddhāṁ tām eva vidadhāmy aham

स तया श्रद्धया युक्तस्तस्याराधनमीहते ।
लभते च ततः कामान् मयैव विहितान् हि तान् ॥ २२॥
sa tayā śraddhayā yuktas tasyārādhanam īhate
labhate ca tataḥ kāmān mayaivaḥ vihitān hi tān

Whoever sincerely wishes to worship other deities with devotion, I grant them the required unflinching faith. (7.21)

Such a devotee will propitiate the chosen deity with unflinching faith and will receive the fruits of the worship which are actually granted by Me (intrinsically residing in that specific deity). (7.22)

Comments: There are broadly two types of devotees which are not mutually exclusive. *Shuddha Bhagavathas*

(Pure Devotees of Lord Almighty) and *Mishrayajees* (devotees of other deities). Verse (7.19) described the characteristics of learned ones and they belong to the class of *Shuddha Bhagavathas*. Among *Mishrayajees* (*Mishra* = mixed; *yajee* = worshipper), there are two types. The first category is the so called *Trividyas* (those who perform rituals based on the peripheral meanings of the three **Vedas**). They believe that the purpose of the **Vedas** is to help one acquire material riches and they accordingly perform Vedic rituals to propitiate lesser deities to get their desires fulfilled. Even in this case, the actual rewards are granted by the Lord using lesser deities as the medium. The second category of *Mishrayajees* are really *Shuddha Bhagavathas* who are pure devotees of the Lord, but for various reasons also propitiate other deities. They will over time receive proper guidance from a teacher and will focus on worship of the Lord without expectation and will ultimately achieve *moksha*.

अन्तवत्तु फलं तेषां तद्भवत्यल्पमेधसाम् ।
देवान् देवयजो यान्ति मद्भक्ता यान्ति मामपि ॥ २३ ॥
antavat tu phalaṁ teṣāṁ tad bhavaty alpamedhasām
devān devayajo yānti madbhaktā yānti mām api

Those who propitiate other deities due to their limited understanding, will receive only minimum, temporary fruits. On the other hand, those who are primarily devoted to Me will ultimately reach Me and experience eternal bliss. (7.23)

Comments: If propitiating other deities results in rewards, why should one focus on propitiating the Lord Almighty alone? This verse answers by stating that one

who propitiates only other, lesser deities will receive only temporary fruits. Even if they reach the worlds of other deities after their time on earth, their stay in those worlds will be temporary. On the other hand, devotees who primarily worship the Lord Almighty will eventually attain the Lord's abode permanently. Sri Rayaru clarifies in [GV] that it is not prohibited for one to worship other deities; one should worship other deities as members of the Lord Almighty's entourage (*parivara*) and not separately.

The Ignorant Have False Knowledge

अव्यक्तं व्यक्तिमापन्नं मन्यन्ते मामबुद्धयः ।
परं भावमजानन्तो ममाव्ययमनुत्तमम् ॥ २४ ॥

avyaktaṁ vyaktim āpannaṁ manyante mām abuddhayaḥ
paraṁ bhāvam ajānanto mamāvyayam anuttamam

Unwise people, who are not aware of My eternal, infinite, auspicious, superior attributes, wrongly think of Me, the Unmanifest, as having a perishable existence. (7.24)

Comments: What separates the Lord Almighty from other deities? Why do those who propitiate other deities receive temporary rewards, while those who worship the Lord Almighty receive permanent bliss? This verse answers these questions. Ignorant ones (termed *abuddhayas*) do not realize that the Lord Almighty is supreme, has no births, and does not have a perishable body. They perceive the Lord as having perishable existence.

Sri Rayaru in [GV] provides a second interpretation for this verse as follows – Ignorant ones who are not able to

comprehend the Lord's supremacy or His infinite, auspicious attributes, regard Him as identical to individual souls.

In summary, verses (7.20) to (7.24) describe the characteristics of the three types of beings: *Shuddha Bhagavathas* (*sattvic*), *Trividyas* (*rajasic*), and *Abuddhayas* (*tamasic*). This concept is covered in detail in Chapter 17.

नाहं प्रकाशः सर्वस्य योगमायासमावृतः ।
मूढोऽयं नाभिजानाति लोको मामजमव्ययम् ।। २५।।
nāhaṁ prakāśaḥ sarvasya yogamāyāsamāvṛtaḥ
mūḍhoyaṁ nābhijānāti loko mām ajam avyayam

Shrouded by My infinite strength and the curtain of Maya (Goddess Durga) as willed by Me, I am not comprehensible to everyone. Fools in this world do not know Me as the one without beginning or end. (7.25)

Comments: Why are some not able to acquire proper understanding of the Lord's attributes? This verse states that one can only imbibe knowledge based on one's innate nature. It is due to the will of the Lord Almighty and Goddess Durga's form of MahaLakshmi (who operates under the control of Lord as per verse 7.14) that the ignorant are not able to acquire proper understanding of the Lord's attributes. Does it cause concern to the Lord that some ascribe wrong qualities on Him? No. It is the Lord Himself who causes such ignorance to the undeserving.

The word *yogamaya* is interpreted as '*yoga sahita maya'*, where *yoga* refers to the Lord's infinite strength and *maya* refers to Goddess Durga. As per Sri

Madhwacharya [GB], Sri Jaya Teertha [PD], and Sri Rayaru [GV], *yoga* can be interpreted to mean either *upaya* (means or instrument) or strength (*shakti*). However, in this verse, the interpretation of *yoga* as strength is correct as *maya* already represents the instrument (*upaya*) of strength. This interpretation is also supported by **Padma Purana**.

Shrouded Divine Knowledge

वेदाहं समतीतानि वर्तमानानि चार्जुन ।
भविष्याणि च भूतानि मां तु वेद न कश्चन ।। २६ ।।

vedāhaṁ samatītāni vartamānāni cārjuna
bhaviṣyāṇi ca bhūtāni māṁ tu veda na kaścana

O Arjuna! I am completely aware of all prior, current, and future conditions of all beings. But no one knows Me (completely). (7.26)

Comments: If the curtain of Maya results in some not being able to understand the Lord's attributes, does the same curtain prevent the Lord from knowing about them? This verse emphatically states that the Lord knows everything (past, present and even future) about everyone. This in fact is one of His major attributes. However, no one knows the Lord completely. Other enormously powerful deities such as Goddess Mahalakshmi, Brahma, Vayudeva etc., know the Lord Almighty extremely well, but not fully, and their knowledge is also due to His grace.

इच्छाद्वेषसमुत्थेन द्वन्द्वमोहेन भारत ।
सर्वभूतानि संमोहं सर्गे यान्ति परन्तप ।। २७ ।।

icchādveṣasamutthena dvandvamohena bhārata
sarvabhūtāni saṁmohaṁ sarge yānti paraṁtapa

O Bharata! O Parantapa! All beings are ignorant about the Lord from the very beginning of creation due their delusion in dualities such as happiness/sadness, caused due to corruption by the qualities of desire/avarice. (7.27)

Comments: In verses (7.14) and (7.25), it was stated that the prime cause for one's ignorance is the will of the Lord Almighty and Goddess Durga. This verse states that in addition, there are two secondary causes for one's ignorance: desire and aversion. These two passions cloud one's judgement about dualities such as happiness/sadness, success/failure etc. An alternate interpretation by Sri Rayaru in [GV] based on Sri Madhwacharya's [GB] and [GTN] is as follows: the primary reason for one's delusion in non-duality of the Lord and the individual soul is due to the influence of the Lord and Goddess Durga.

Overcome False Knowledge and Worship with Conviction

येषां त्वन्तगतं पापं जनानां पुण्यकर्मणाम् ।
ते द्वन्द्वमोहनिर्मुक्ता भजन्ते मां दृढव्रताः ।। २८ ।।

yeṣāṁ tv antagataṁ pāpaṁ janānāṁ puṇyakarmaṇām
te dvandvamohanirmuktā bhajante māṁ dṛḍhavratāḥ

Those virtuous people who have washed off their sins and have overcome the delusion of dualities such as pleasure/pain worship Me with steadfast conviction. (7.28)

Comments: Verse (7.27) seems to indicate that all living beings suffer from delusion right from the time of creation. This verse clarifies that people who perform virtuous acts will be rid of their sins and will get over the

delusion of dualities. They worship the Lord with steadfast conviction.

This verse is a summary of this chapter as per Sri Vishnu Teertha's [BGS] as it indicates the primary qualities of virtuous beings who focus on worship of the Lord with steadfast conviction.

जरामरणमोक्षाय मामाश्रित्य यतन्ति ये ।

ते ब्रह्म तद्विदुः कृत्स्नम् अध्यात्मं कर्म चाखिलम् ॥ २९ ॥

jarāmaraṇamokṣāya mām āśritya yatanti ye
te brahma tad viduḥ kṛtsnam adhyātmaṁ karma cākhilam

Those seeking liberation from mortal afflictions such as old age and death, take refuge in Me, and acquire the right knowledge of *Brahman* (the Lord Almighty), *Adhyatma* (the individual self) and *karma* (all actions). (7.29)

Comments: This verse states that the reward for one worshipping the Lord as per (7.28), is attainment of spiritual knowledge about: *Brahman* (The Supreme Lord), *adhyatma* (prime self) and *karma* (fruitive action). For one to escape worldly entanglements, it is important to learn about the Lord's nature in addition to worshipping the Lord with steadfast conviction, as proper knowledge strengthens conviction.

The Last Moments

साधिभूताधिदैवं मां साधियज्ञं च ये विदुः ।

प्रयाणकालेऽपि च मां ते विदुर्युक्तचेतसः ॥ ३० ॥

sādhibhūtādhidaivaṁ māṁ sādhiyajñaṁ ca ye viduḥ
prayāṇakālepi ca māṁ te vidur yuktacetasaḥ

One who have proper knowledge about *Adhiyajna* (Lord of Sacrifice) along with that of *Adhibhoota* (prime materials) and *Adhidaiva* (prime deities), and who think of Me (Lord Krishna) during their last moments have their minds fully transfixed on Me and will indeed know Me. (7.30)

Comments: This verse concludes the teaching in this chapter which is about the concepts of knowledge and wisdom. The Lord summarizes the teaching by stating that the learned ones who are focused on Him with steadfast conviction are knowledgeable about specialized topics (*vijnana*) such as *Brahma, Karma, Adhyatma, Adhibhoota, Adhidaiva and Adhiyajna*. Remembering this knowledge especially during the time a seeker leaves the body will ensure that the seeker will attain the Lord. These concepts are described in more detail in the next chapter.

Summary of Chapter 7

The first 6 chapters were broadly concerned with descriptions of the methods and procedures (both external and internal) that a seeker would need to perform to be able to acquire divine, spiritual knowledge. The next 6 chapters describe in more detail such divine, spiritual knowledge about the Lord which forms the principle message of the **Gita**. In earlier chapters 2 – 6, there were some discussions on the Lord's attributes which were included contextually, and the next 6 chapters provide more exclusive details about the Lord' attributes. Chapter 7 provides a detailed discussion of the two types of learning – knowledge and wisdom. Ordinary knowledge (*jnana*) is that knowledge that is gained from scriptural studies and through teachers. Wisdom or direct knowledge

(*vijnana*) is specialized knowledge about the Lord Almighty that one can attain after self-realization. In verses (7.4) - (7.6), the components of the eight-fold nature in the universe are identified. In verses (7.7) - (7.11), the Lord describes His ownership of everything in the universe and stresses that He is responsible for even the intrinsic attributes of objects. The cause of ignorance, the influence of delusion on living beings, and procedure to overcome delusion are also discussed in verses (7.13) – (7.14). The various types of seekers who are devoted to the Lord are identified in verses (7.16) – (7.19) as those in sickness, those seeking spiritual knowledge, those seeking riches, and those who have already acquired divine, spiritual knowledge. Among these four types of devotees, the Lord is fond of the last type who worship Him without any expectations. Verses (7.20) – (7.23) deal with worshippers of other deities in comparison with those who are exclusively devoted to the Lord Almighty. Those who only worship other deities may receive temporary fruits and those who exclusively worship the Lord Almighty ultimately attain everlasting bliss. In verses (7.24)- (7.26), the issue of false knowledge is described. In verse (7.28), the Lord exhorts the virtuous to overcome false knowledge and worship Him with conviction. The chapter ends with a message from the Lord in verses (7.29) – (7.30) about the thoughts that a seeker should focus at the time of leaving this world. These last two verses act as a bridge to the next chapter where the concepts introduced here are dealt with in detail.

।। इति सप्तमोऽध्यायः ।।

End of Chapter 7

अष्टमोऽध्यायः – अक्षरब्रह्मयोगः
Chapter 8 - The Imperishable Lord

Chapter Introduction: This chapter, titled '*Akshara Brahma Yoga*', the path of the imperishable Lord, comprising 28 verses shows the sure path to reach the Lord through concentrated meditation and single pointed devotion. The previous chapter covered the issues of indirect knowledge and direct knowledge as they relate to the Lord. Towards the end of the chapter, in verses (7.29) and (7.30), the Lord introduced some special topics such as *Adhibhoota, Adhidaiva, Adhiyajna* etc. This terminology was used for the first time, and Arjuna naturally has questions about their context and meaning. The Lord answers Arjuna's questions, and much of the chapter is devoted to the act of remembering the Lord during one's final moments, and one's journey hereafter.

Arjuna's Eight Questions

अर्जुन उवाच ।
किं तद् ब्रह्म किमध्यात्मं किं कर्म पुरुषोत्तम ।
अधिभूतं च किं प्रोक्तमधिदैवं किमुच्यते ।। १ ।।
arjuna uvāca
kiṁ tad brahma kim adhyātmaṁ kiṁ karma puruṣottama
adhibhūtaṁ ca kiṁ proktam adhidaivaṁ kim ucyate

अधियज्ञः कथं कोऽत्र देहेऽस्मिन् मधुसूदन ।
प्रयाणकाले च कथं ज्ञेयोऽसि नियतात्मभिः ।। २ ।।
adhiyajñaḥ kathaṁ kotra dehesmin madhusūdana
prayāṇakāle ca kathaṁ jñeyosi niyatātmabhiḥ

Arjuna said:

O Purushottama (The Supreme One)! Who is '*Brahma*' (Lord Almighty)? What is '*Adhyatma*' (Prime Self)? What is '*Karma*' (Fruitive Action)? What does one call '*Adhibhoota*' (Prime Nature)? Who are '*Adhidaiva*' (Prime Deities)? (8.1)

O Madhusoodana! Who is known as '*Adhiyajna*' (Lord of Sacrifice) in this body? And why? How are you to be known at the time of departure by *yogis* (seekers) with self-control? (8.2)

Comments: In verse (7.30), the Lord stated the need for one to have proper knowledge about Him, especially during one's last moments. Arjuna has eight questions regarding the concepts in verses (7.29) and (7.30). Lord Krishna answers these questions in the next few verses.

Brahma, Karma, Adhibhoota, Adhidaiva, Adhyatma, Adhiyajna

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

अक्षरं ब्रह्म परमं स्वभावोऽध्यात्ममुच्यते ।

भूतभावोद्भवकरो विसर्गः कर्मसंज्ञितः ।। ३ ।।

śrībhagavān uvāca
akṣaraṁ brahma paramaṁ svabhāvodhyātmam ucyate
bhūtabhāvodbhavakaro visargaḥ karmasaṁjñitaḥ

The Lord said:

'*Brahma*' refers to the imperishable Lord who pervades everything and everyone. '*Adhyatma*' refers to the material equipment that allows a soul to act (body, sense organs,

conscience). '*Karma*' refers to the Lord's act of creation which is responsible for the birth and existence of all living beings. (8.3)

Comments: The Lord responds to each of Arjuna's eight questions.

1. *Brahma* refers to the imperishable Lord Almighty. The adjective '*param*' (meaning supreme) is used here to denote the Lord Almighty as there are other imperishable (*akshara*) entities also in the universe such as inert nature, the letters, the **Vedas** etc. (verse 2.17) who are dependent on the Lord

2. *Adhyatma* (Prime Self) refers to material equipment that helps a soul to function in this world: physical body, sense organs, conscience (which the Lord grants according to a soul's *svabhāva* - innate nature)

3. *Karma* (Fruitive Action) refers to *visarga* – the special activity of creation of the universe performed by The Lord Almighty.

अधिभूतं क्षरो भावः पुरुषश्चाधिदैवतम् ।
अधियज्ञोऽहमेवात्र देहे देहभृतां वर ॥ ४ ॥
adhibhūtaṁ kṣaro bhāvaḥ puruṣaś cādhidaivatam
adhiyajñoham evātra dehe dehabhṛtāṁ vara

O Arjuna! The five basic elements of material nature (earth, fire, water, space, wind) form '*Adhibhoota*'. Superior deities who reside inside and govern the physical bodies of living beings (namely Sesha, the serpent deity and the four faced deity Brahma) form '*Adhidaiva*'.

Powering all living being*s* and the consumer of offerings in all sacrifices is Me, going by the name of *'Adhiyajna'* (Lord of Sacrifice). (8.4)

Comments: The Lord continues to answer Arjuna's remaining questions:

1. *Adhibhoota* (Prime Nature) refers to the five basic elements of nature (fire, water, earth, space, wind) that comprise one's physical body.

2. *Adhidaiva* (Prime Deities) refers to superior deities such as Sesha and four faced Brahma that reside in the bodies of living beings.

3. *Adhiyajna* (Lord of Sacrifice) refers to Me (Lord Krishna).

4. The Lord is termed *Adhiyajna* as He activates and powers one to perform sacrifices and He is also the consumer of the essence of such sacrifices as was stated previously (verse 5.29).

Sri Rayaru in [GV] provides additional interpretations for some of these entities based on Sri Madhwacharya's [GB] as follows: *Adhyatma* also refers to the Lord's form (as He has the prime or supreme form), *Adhidaiva* also refers to Goddess Mahalakshmi (as she is the foremost among all deities), and *Adhibhoota* refers to all living beings (as living beings are superior to inert objects).

The Final Moments

अन्तकाले च मामेव स्मरन् मुक्त्वा कलेवरम् ।
यः प्रयाति स मद्भावं याति नास्त्यत्र संशयः ॥ ५ ॥

antakāle ca mām eva smaran muktvā kalevaram
yaḥ prayāti sa madbhāvaṁ yāti nāsty atra saṁśayaḥ

यं यं वापि स्मरन् भावं त्यजत्यन्ते कलेवरम् ।
तं तमेवैति कौन्तेय सदा तद्भावभावितः ॥ ६ ॥
yaṁ yaṁ vāpi smaran bhāvaṁ tyajaty ante kalevaram
taṁ tam evaiti kaunteya sadā tadbhāvabhāvitaḥ

One who thinks of Me (Krishna) at the time of leaving one's body will attain Me. There is no doubt about this. (8.5)

O Son of Kunti! Whatever entity one thinks of at the time of leaving one's body, one will attain the same entity (due to the force of habit). (8.6)

Comments: The Lord answers Arjuna's eighth question by stating that learned seekers remember the Lord at the time of leaving the body which results in them attaining the Lord, which is a state of permanent, exalted happiness devoid of any misery. How does one, who is focused on the Lord at the time of departing this world, reach the Lord? Whatever entity one is thinking of during the last moments, the person will attain that entity in succeeding births. The story of king Bharata in **Bhagavata Purana** illustrates this. Bharatha, once rescued a deer struggling in flood waters and nourished it back to health. He developed a strong attachment to it and was thinking of it even at the last moments of his life. This resulted in him being born as a deer.

It should be noted that the verse says, '*anta kala*', meaning the final moments. It does not say the final instant. This is because, everyone at the exact final instant

of the soul leaving the body feels relief. However, it is only the learned devotees of the Lord who remember Him in the moments leading up to death.

Sri Madhwacharya in his **Bhagavata Tatparya Nirnaya** [BTN] commentary on the epic **Bhagavata Maha Purana** [BMP] (10.1.42) quotes the **Naradeeya Purana** and states that one's innate eligibility and the Lord's will are the deciding factors in determining one's next birth (in addition to one's final thoughts). Thus, one who is thinking of angels during the last moments may not be born as an angel but may be born in the vicinity of angels.

तस्मात् सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युध्य च ।
मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्मामेवैष्यस्यसंशयः ।। ७ ।।
tasmāt sarveṣu kāleṣu mām anusmara yudhya ca
mayy arpitamanobuddhir mām evaiṣyasy asaṁśayaḥ

Hence keep thinking about Me (Krishna) always. Perform your duty of fighting this just war with your mind and intellect focused on Me and you will certainly attain Me. There is no doubt about this. (8.7)

Comments: After emphasizing the need to remember Him during one's last moments the Lord gets back to Arjuna's dilemma. He exhorts him to keep his mind and intellect focused on Him and get on with fighting the just war. This would ensure that Arjuna would not be tainted by any adverse effects of the war.

अभ्यासयोगयुक्तेन चेतसाऽनन्यगामिना ।
परमं पुरुषं दिव्यं याति पार्थानुचिन्तयन् ।। ८ ।।
abhyāsayogayuktena cetasā nānyagāminā
paramaṁ puruṣaṁ divyaṁ yāti pārthānucintayan

O Partha! One who, through rigorous practice of mind control, withdraws the mind from worldly matters and focuses the mind and the intellect on the divine, supreme, omnipresent Lord Almighty, will reach the Lord's abode. (8.8)

Comments: How can one ensure that one's mind will be focused on the Lord during the final moments, especially as one would normally be in great pain due to physical ailments? The Lord answers by stating that through rigorous practice of mind control, one can develop the habit of focusing the mind on Him and approach all activities with an attitude that He is the one who is actually performing the activities. This will help a seeker to keep the Lord in mind, which becomes useful during the last moments of life.

The Lord's Form for Recollection

कविं पुराणमनुशासितारम्
अणोरणीयांसमनुस्मरेद्यः ।
सर्वस्य धातारमचिन्त्यरूपम्
अदित्यवर्णं तमसः परस्तात् ।। ९ ।।

kaviṁ purāṇam anuśāsitāraṁ aṇor aṇīyāṁsam anusmared yaḥ
sarvasya dhātāram acintyarūpaṁ ādityavarṇaṁ tamasaḥ parastāt

One should meditate on the Lord Almighty as one who is omniscient, who is ancient, who governs the entire universe, who is smaller than the smallest object, who supports and protects everyone and everything in the universe, who is incomprehensible, who has the radiance

of the Sun, and who transcends material nature. One should think of the Lord especially during one's last moments. (8.9)

Comments: The previous verses stated that one must remember the Lord during one's final moments. In what way should one remember the Lord? This verse provides a compact yet powerful description of the Lord's form and attributes as eight qualities that one must memorize and make efforts to remember always. This would make it easy for a seeker to remember the Lord during the final moments. The comparison of the Lord's radiance with that of the Sun is only to give an example so that one can comprehend it to some extent. The Lord's qualities such as radiance and splendor are infinite. Just to ensure that there is no misinterpretation due to the comparison with the Sun, this verse also uses the phrase '*tamasa para*' meaning the Lord transcends material nature.

The Final Journey

प्रयाणकाले मनसाऽचलेन
भक्त्या युक्तो योगबलेन चैव ।
भ्रुवोर्मध्ये प्राणमावेश्य सम्यक्
स तं परं पुरुषमुपैति दिव्यम् ।। १० ।।

prayāṇakāle manasācalena bhaktyā yukto yogabalena caiva
bhruvor madhye prāṇam āveśya samyak sa taṁ paraṁ puruṣam upaiti divyam

One who, at the time of leaving one's body, meditates on the divine form of the Lord with utmost devotion, with

focused mind, and holds one's life breath in the forehead between the eyebrows, will surely reach the Lord's abode. (8.10)

Comments: This verse describes the breath control that one must attempt at the last moments of life while one is meditating on the Lord. Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies that this requirement applies primarily to those who are practitioners of *pranayama* and have attained proficiency in breath control and are termed *vayujayi* (one who has conquered breath). One must practice other techniques indicated earlier such as detachment, devotion, learning etc., to achieve *moksha*. Sri Jaya Teertha in [PD] states that two types of seekers are recognized here. One proficient in the path of devotion (*Bhakti Yoga*) and the other proficient in breath control (*pranayama*).

यदक्षरं वेदविदो वदन्ति
विशन्ति यद् यतयो वीतरागाः ।
यदिच्छन्तो ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति
तत्ते पदं संग्रहेण प्रवक्ष्ये ।। ११ ।।
yad akṣaraṁ vedavido vadanti viśanti yad yatayo vītarāgāḥ yad icchanto brahmacaryaṁ caranti tat te padaṁ saṁgra-heṇa pravakṣye

Those learned in the **Vedas** know the Lord as eternal, with no end. Those who have relinquished passions such as lust and anger will strive to attain the Lord. Seekers control their sense organs and focus their minds on Brahma (Lord Almighty). I will explain to you briefly about that Supreme Principal (Lord Almighty). (8.11)

Comments: The previous verse described the procedure for breath control for those proficient in *pranayama* (which should also be attempted by everyone else). This verse describes further requirements for those who have conquered the breath (*vayujayi*).

सर्वद्वाराणि संयम्य मनो हृदि निरूध्य च ।
मूर्ध्न्याधायात्मनः प्राणम् आस्थितो योगधारणाम् ।। १२।।
sarvadvārāṇi saṁyamya mano hṛdi nirudhya ca
mūrdhny ādhāyātmanaḥ prāṇam āsthito yogadhāraṇām

ओमित्येकाक्षरं ब्रह्म व्याहरन् मामनुस्मरन् ।
यः प्रयाति त्यजन् देहं स याति परमां गतिम् ।। १३ ।।
om ity ekākṣaraṁ brahma vyāharan mām anusmaran
yaḥ prayāti tyajan dehaṁ sa yāti paramāṁ gatim

At the time of leaving the physical body, a seeker should control all channel outlets in the body (except the *Sushumna* channel), with the mind focused on the Lord, and immerse in continuous meditation on the Lord, with the life breath centered on the forehead. (8.12)

Such a person who, with great devotion to the Lord chants the primordial syllable '*Om*' will leave the body to traverse to the Lord's abode. (8.13)

Comments: As there are many channels in the body, one must attempt to leave the body out of the head through the *Sushumna* channel to reach the Lord's abode. One who leaves the body through other channels will reach other worlds. For example, one leaving out of one's eye will reach Surya Loka, the world of the Sun deity. This

verse also states that the seeker should focus the mind on '*hrudi*' which Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies is a reference to Lord Narayana. The word *hrudi* expands as *harati* + *jagat*, meaning 'One who dissolves the universe'.

The primordial syllable *Om* succinctly represents the Lord. *Om,* made up of three letters *a*, *u* and *ma* expands into the three parts of the holy Gayatri hymn which itself expands into the three sections of the Vedic hymn the **Purusha Sookta** from where all Vedic literature emerged. Later in chapter (10.25), the Lord Himself states that among all letters, He dwells in the letter *Om* giving it supremacy. Verse (17.23) also has additional details on the primordial syllable *Om*.

अनन्यचेताः सततं यो मां स्मरति नित्यशः ।
तस्याहं सुलभः पार्थ नित्ययुक्तस्य योगिनः ॥ १४ ॥

ananyacetāḥ satataṁ yo māṁ smarati nityaśaḥ
tasyāhaṁ sulabhaḥ pārtha nityayuktasya yoginaḥ

O Partha! I am easily attainable to those who are continuously meditating on Me, with their wandering minds withdrawn from stray thoughts. (8.14)

Comments: In previous verses the Lord instructed that one should strive to remember Him during one's final moments. In this verse, it is clarified that only those who are constantly thinking about and meditating on the Lord (*nitya yukta*), forcibly withdrawing the wandering mind from worldly issues, will be able to remember Him when it counts the most, that is at the final moment.

This verse is a succinct summary of this chapter as stated by Sri Madinur Vishnu Teertha in [BGS].

No Rebirths for Those Attaining the Lord

मामुपेत्य पुनर्जन्म दुःखालयमशाश्वतम् ।
नाऽप्नुवन्ति महात्मानः संसिद्धिं परमां गताः ॥ १५ ॥
mām upetya punarjanma duḥkhālayam aśāśvatam
nāpnuvanti mahātmānaḥ saṁsiddhiṁ paramāṁ gatāḥ

आब्रह्मभवनाल्लोकाः पुनरावर्तिनोऽर्जुन ।
मामुपेत्य तु कौन्तेय पुनर्जन्म न विद्यते ॥ १६ ॥
ā brahmabhavanāl lokāḥ punarāvartinorjuna
mām upetya tu kaunteya punarjanma na vidyate

Learned ones, who through their efforts have reached My abode, will not return to this world of misery, and will not take on transitory physical bodies again. (8.15)

O Arjuna! Those who hereafter attain all other heavenly worlds below the abode of Brahma, will ultimately return to the cycle of births and deaths. O Son of Kunti! Those who attain My abode will be in eternal bliss and will never be born again. (8.16)

Comments: In verse (8.13), it was stated that learned ones who remember the Lord during their final moments will reach the Lord's abode. These two verses clarify that one who reaches the Lord's abode will not return to the earth which is the dwelling place for living beings with transitory physical bodies.

The six upper worlds above earth are *Bhuvarloka, Suvarloka, Maharloka, Janoloka, Tapoloka and Satyaloka*. Those who reach the worlds of *Janoloka, Tapoloka* and *Satyaloka* will not return to earth. This is because of the

Lord's special presence in them. This is clarified by Sri Rayaru in [GV].

Creation and Dissolution of the Universe

सहस्रयुगपर्यन्तम् अहर्यद्ब्रह्मणो विदुः ।
रात्रिं युगसहस्रान्तां तेऽहोरात्रविदो जनाः ॥ १७ ॥
sahasrayugaparyantam ahar yad brahmaṇo viduḥ
rātriṁ yugasahasrāntāṁ te.ahorātravido janāḥ

Those who know that the Lord's day spans over multitudes of *yugas,* and His night also spans multitudes of *yugas,* are knowers of Day and Night. (8.17)

Comments: In this verse, the Lord introduces the concept of Day and Night in relation to His acts of creation and dissolution of the universe. Sri Rayaru in [GV] states that the word *sahasra* used in this verse should not be construed to literally mean thousands, but to uncountable multitudes (as no one can count the Lord's time). The duration of creation and dissolution of the universe are symbolically indicated as daytime and night-time for the Lord Almighty, as His time cannot be measured.

Sri Satyadhyana Teertha in his [GPC] states that *yuga* referred to here indicates a 100 years of Brahma, whose one year is made up of 360 days, with each day equating to 864 crore (8.64 Billion) human years.

अव्यक्ताद् व्यक्तयः सर्वाः प्रभवन्त्यहरागमे ।
रात्र्यागमे प्रलीयन्ते तत्रैवाव्यक्तसंज्ञके ॥ १८ ॥
avyaktād vyaktayaḥ sarvāḥ prabhavanty aharāgame
rātryāgame pralīyante tatraivāvyaktasaṁjñake

During the Lord Almighty's daytime (after the conclusion of the great dissolution of the universe), the unmanifest Lord undertakes the creation of the universe. During the night-time of the Lord, the universe is dissolved into Him. (8.18)

Comments: The dawn of the day for the Lord (*avyakta*) is when the dissolution of the universe is completed, and the process of creation starts. The time of dissolution of the universe is described as the nighttime of the Lord. No one can measure the Lord's time. Sri Madhwacharya in [GTN] states that the word *nimesha* (time to bat an eyelid) is used to informally indicate the split second of time taken for creation or dissolution of the universe.

भूतग्रामः स एवायं भूत्वा भूत्वा प्रलीयते ।
रात्र्यागमेऽवशः पार्थ प्रभवत्यहरागमे ।। १९ ।।
bhūtagrāmaḥ sa evāyaṁ bhūtvā bhūtvā pralīyate
rātryāgamevaśaḥ pārtha prabhavaty aharāgame

O Partha! The multitudes of living beings and inert nature are repeatedly created, and they undergo dissolution into the Lord and will again be created. This is the cycle of creation, sustenance, and dissolution. (8.19)

Comments: This verse states that the process of creation and dissolution of the universe are continuous and endless.

The Lord Almighty's Supremacy (Hari Sarvottamattva)

परस्तस्मात्तु भावोऽन्योऽव्यक्तो व्यक्तात् सनातनः ।
यः स सर्वेषु भूतेषु नश्यत्सु न विनश्यति ।। २० ।।

paras tasmāt tu bhāvonyovyaktovyaktāt sanātanaḥ
yaḥ sa sarveṣu bhūteṣu naśyatsu na vinaśyati

अव्यक्तोऽक्षर इत्युक्तस्तमाहुः परमां गतिम् ।
यं प्राप्य न निवर्तन्ते तद्धाम परमं मम ॥ २१ ॥
avyaktokṣara ity uktas tam āhuḥ paramāṁ gatim
yaṁ prāpya na nivartante tad dhāma paramaṁ mama

The unmanifest entity, which is vastly different and superior to the visible universe made up of individual souls and inert nature, is the invisible supreme Lord Almighty who will never perish even when everything in the universe perishes. (8.20)

This unmanifest principle is the Lord Almighty, to reach whom, is the goal of everyone. One who reaches Him will never return to this world. Such is My supreme form. (8.21)

Comments: Since the previous verses described the concepts of Day and Night for the Lord to represent the times of creation and dissolution of the universe, one may question if the Lord is also subject to birth and decay. Verse (8.20) clarifies that the Lord who is responsible for creation and dissolution is eternal, has no beginning or end, and is imperishable. Verse (8.21) clarifies that He goes by the name of *Akshara* (one without decay) because of His imperishable nature. This verse also states that one who reaches the Lord's abode will never return to the earth.

Verse (8.20) uses the terms '*para*' and '*anya*' meaning supreme and different respectively, indicating that the Lord Almighty is superior to and different from all other

entities in the universe such as individual souls and inert objects. This concept is further emphasized later in chapter 15 (verses 16-20) and validates the philosophy of dualism propagated by Sri Madhwacharya.

Devotion is the Superior Path

पुरुषः स परः पार्थ भक्त्या लभ्यस्त्वनन्यया ।
यस्यान्तःस्थानि भूतानि येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।। २२ ।।

puruṣaḥ sa paraḥ pārtha bhaktyā labhyas tv ananyayā
yasyāntaḥsthāni bhūtāni yena sarvam idaṁ tatam

O Partha! The Supreme One is reachable only by pure, exclusive devotion. Such a Lord is resident in all beings and pervades the entire universe. (8.22)

Comments: In verse (8.10), it was stated that devotion, meditation, and detachment are all required for one to reach the Lord. As per Sri Rayaru [GV], this verse clarifies that devotion to the Lord is the preeminent path.

Returning and Non-returning Paths

यत्र काले त्वनावृत्तिम् आवृत्तिं चैव योगिनः ।
प्रयाता यान्ति तं कालं वक्ष्यामि भरतर्षभ ।। २३ ।।

yatra kāle tv anāvṛttim āvṛttiṁ caiva yoginaḥ
prayātā yānti taṁ kālaṁ vakṣyāmi bharatarṣabha

अग्निर्ज्योतिरहः शुक्लः षण्मासा उत्तरायणम् ।
तत्र प्रयाता गच्छन्ति ब्रह्म ब्रह्मविदो जनाः ।। २४ ।।

agnir jotir ahaḥ śuklaḥ ṣaṇmāsā uttarāyaṇam
tatra prayātā gacchanti brahma brahmavido janāḥ

धूमो रात्रिस्तथा कृष्णः षण्मासा दक्षिणायनम् ।
तत्र चान्द्रमसं ज्योतिर्योगी प्राप्य निवर्तते ।। २५ ।।
dhūmo rātris tathā kṛṣṇaḥ ṣaṇmāsā dakṣiṇāyanam
tatra cāndramasaṁ jyotir yogī prāpya nivartate

शुक्लकृष्णे गती ह्येते जगतः शाश्वते मते ।
एकया यात्यनावृत्तिम् अन्ययाऽऽवर्तते पुनः ।। २६ ।।
śuklakṛṣṇe gatī hy ete jagataḥ śāśvate mate
ekayā yāty anāvṛttim anyayāvartate punaḥ

O Arjuna, superior among Bharatas! I will now teach you about the paths taken by seekers from which they will either return to this world or not return to this world. The paths are identified by their respective governing deities. (8.23)

Eligible seekers, leaving this world through the path of deities governing fire, light, daytime, fortnight of the waxing moon, and the first half of a lunar year, will reach the abode of the Lord and will not return to this world. (8.24)

Other seekers leaving this world through the path of deities governing smoke, nighttime, the fortnight of waning moon, and the second half of a lunar year will reach the land of the Moon deity and will return to this world again. (8.25)

These two paths are permanent and are termed as the '*Shukla*' path and the '*Krishna*' path. Those leaving through the first path will not return and those leaving through the second path will return to this world. (8.26)

Comments: These three verses describe the paths taken by a soul after leaving the physical body. The soul progressively traverses the worlds governed by various deities. Some seekers leave this world and traverse the worlds governed by the following deities – *agni/archi* (fire), *aha* (daytime), *shukla paksha* (fortnight of waxing moon), and *uttarayana* (first half of a lunar new year). These seekers, who predominantly take the path of knowledge (*jnana yogis*) will ultimately reach the abode of Lord Almighty and will never return to the earth. Other seekers leave this world and traverse the worlds governed by the following deities – *dhooma* (smoke), *ratri* (nighttime), *krishna paksha* (fortnight of waning moon) and *dakshinayana* (second half of a lunar new year). These seekers who are focused on the path of action (*karma yogis*) with expectation of rewards will return to this earth.

Some commentators adopt the literal translation of the times and periods indicated in these verses and wrongly conclude that the destination of a soul depends on the time, day, fortnight, and month of leaving this world. Sri Rayaru in [GV] based on Sri Madhwacharya's [GB] clarifies that the reference to the time periods indicated in these verses should be interpreted to mean the respective governing deities. After all, Time is inert. How can time determine the destination of a soul? Also, not all entities identified in these verses are related to time (*kala*). For example, *agni/archi, dhooma* are not related to time. Hence the entities described in these verses can only be interpreted to mean their respective governing deities. Further, as per Sri Madhwacharya's [GB], in **Padma**

Purana it is clarified that an *aparoksha jnani* (seeker with direct, divine knowledge of the Lord) will achieve liberation regardless of the time/day/fortnight/month of leaving this world.

In the **Mahabharata**, it was stated that Bheeshma waits till the onset of *uttarayana* (first half of the lunar year) to leave this world. Does this not imply the superiority of one period over the other? It is clarified by Sri Jaya Teertha in [ND] that among those who attain liberation, the ones who leave their body during the period of *uttarayana* experience higher bliss. One must remember that as Bheeshma was an *iccha marani* and had the power to decide the time of his exit from the world his situation cannot be generalized.

In summary, a soul's destination after leaving the physical body is based on the efforts and performance during it's lifetime in this world and acquisition of divine, spiritual knowledge, including knowledge about the paths taken hereafter. The destination is not determined by the time of the soul leaving the body. Sri Rayaru also clarifies this in [GV] quoting the **Brahma Sutra** (4.2.22).

Rewards for Properly Knowing the Paths of the Final Journey

नैते सृती पार्थ जानन् योगी मुह्यति कश्चन ।
तस्मात् सर्वेषु कालेषु योगयुक्तो भवार्जुन।। २७ ।।

naite sṛtī pārtha jānan yogī muhyati kaścana
tasmāt sarveṣu kāleṣu yogayukto bhavārjuna

वेदेषु यज्ञेषु तपःसु चैव
दानेषु यत् पुण्यफलं प्रदिष्टम् ।
अत्येति तत्सर्वमिदं विदित्वा
योगी परं स्थानमुपैति चाद्यम् ।। २८ ।।

vedeṣu yajñeṣu tapaḥsu caiva dāneṣu yat puṇyaphalaṁ pradiṣṭam
atyeti tat sarvam idaṁ viditvā yogī paraṁ sthānam upaiti cādyam

O Partha! A seeker, who properly understands these two paths and acts accordingly will never be deluded. O Arjuna, hence always practice the prescribed activities to reach the Lord. (8.27)

One who understands these principles will accrue more benefits compared to accruals by studying the **Vedas**, performing sacrifices, and donating to others. Moreover, such a seeker will indeed reach the Lord's abode. (8.28)

Comments: These two verses conclude the teachings in this chapter. Lord Krishna instructs Arjuna to understand thoroughly the process of a soul leaving the physical body and the paths taken in reaching the ultimate destination. The Lord reiterates that Arjuna must perform his prescribed duty of waging the just war with proper conviction in the concepts described in this chapter. Further, such knowledge about the paths taken by a soul results in one earning much more benefit than those available from other spiritual activities such as learning **Vedas**, donating to charity etc. The intent here is to demonstrate the importance of such knowledge.

Summary of Chapter 8

Chapter 7 covered the issues of knowledge and wisdom as they relate to the Lord. Towards the end of that chapter, in verses (7.29) and (7.30), the Lord introduced some special topics such as *Adhibhoota, Adhidaiva, Adhiyajna* etc. This terminology was used for the first time and Arjuna naturally had questions about their context and meaning. The Lord answers Arjuna's questions in this chapter, is devoted to the act of remembering the Lord during one's final moments and one's journey hereafter. Arjuna asks eight questions in verses (8.1) and (8.2) and the Lord answers them in verses (8.3) - (8.5). '*Brahma*' refers to the imperishable Lord. '*Adhyatma*' refers to material equipment that allow a soul to act (body, sense organs, conscience). '*Karma*' refers to the Lord's act of creation which is responsible for the birth and existence of all living beings. Basic elements of material nature such as earth and fire form '*Adhibhoota*'. Superior deities who reside inside and govern the physical bodies of living beings (namely Sesha, the serpent deity and the four faced deity Brahma) form '*Adhidaiva*'. Powering all living beings and the consumer of offerings in all sacrifices is the Lord, going by the name of *'Adhiyajna*' (Lord of Sacrifice). The Lord answers Arjuna's eighth question by stating that learned seekers remember the Lord at the time of leaving body which results in them attaining Him. In verses (8.6)-(8.14), the Lord teaches the need for one to remember Him during the final moments and the procedure to do the same. Verses (8.15)-(8.16) state that those who remember the Lord properly during their final moments will not return to earth. The concept of Lord Almighty's day and night and their relationship to His acts of creation

and dissolution of the universe are addressed in verses (8.17)-(8.20). The Lord declares in verse (8.22) that the path of devotion is supreme among all paths available to reach the Lord. The paths taken by a soul after leaving the physical body is described in verses (8.23)-(8.26). The chapter is concluded in verses (8.27) and (8.28) with the Lord instructing Arjuna to focus on his prescribed duty of waging the just war while being fully aware of the key concepts covered in this chapter. These include the knowledge of paths traversed by a soul after leaving the physical body with the ultimate destination being the Lord's abode.

।। इति अष्टमोऽध्यायः ।।

End of Chapter 8

नवमोऽध्यायः – राजविद्याराजगुह्ययोगः
Chapter 9 – Path of Supreme Knowledge and Supreme Secrets

Chapter Introduction: This chapter, titled the 'Path of Supreme Knowledge and Supreme Secrets' comprises of 34 verses. The central message contained here is an assurance to all seekers that they will have their desires fulfilled through devoted worship and meditation on the Lord. The wise seek the Lord through such devotion and worship, while the ignorant seek limited material and mundane gains, and never lead a fulfilled life. This chapter is a continuation of the concepts in Chapter 7 where some important attributes of the Lord were revealed. Towards the end of Chapter 7, the Lord introduces some new concepts such as *Adhyatma, Adhibhoota, Adhidaiva, Adhiyajna* etc. Arjuna's questions about these concepts were answered in Chapter 8. Now, the Lord continues the discussion from Chapter 7. In that sense, Chapters 7, 8 and 9 are in proper sequence. While the Lord has infinite auspicious forms, attributes, activities etc., there are eight activities of the Lord Almighty that directly impact living beings. They are – creation (*Srishti*), sustenance (*Stithi)*, dissolution (*laya*), regulation (*niyamana*), knowledge (*jnana*), ignorance (*ajnana*), bondage (*bandha*) and liberation (*moksha*). Together they are called *Janmadi ashtaka* and they are also covered in this chapter. This chapter is called the Path of Supreme Knowledge ('*Raja Vidya Yoga*') as it teaches these particularly important concepts about the Lord. It is also called the Path of Supreme Secrets ('*Raja Guhya Yoga*') as it should only be taught to the faithful and the deserving.

The Lord's Greatness

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
इदं तु ते गुह्यतमं प्रवक्ष्याम्यनसूयवे ।
ज्ञानं विज्ञानसहितं यज्ज्ञात्वा मोक्ष्यसेऽशुभात् ॥ १ ॥
śrībhagavān uvāca
idaṁ tu te guhyatamaṁ pravakṣyāmy anasūyave
jñānaṁ vijñānasahitaṁ yaj jñātvā mokṣyaseśubhāt

राजविद्या राजगुह्यं पवित्रमिदमुत्तमम् ।
प्रत्यक्षावगमं धर्म्यं सुसुखं कर्तुमव्ययम् ॥ २ ॥
rājavidyā rājaguhyaṁ pavitram idam uttamam
pratyakṣāvagamaṁ dharmyaṁ susukhaṁ kartum avyayam

अश्रद्दधानाः पुरुषा धर्मस्यास्य परंतप ।
अप्राप्य मां निवर्तन्ते मृत्युसंसारवर्त्मनि ॥ ३ ॥
aśraddadhānāḥ puruṣā dharmasyāsya paraṁtapa
aprāpya māṁ nivartante mṛtyusaṁsāravartmani

The Lord said:

I will now impart most confidential principles to you, as you are devoid of faults such as envy and are eligible to receive this teaching. Gaining this sacred and special knowledge along with knowledge from the scriptures will free you from evil. (9.1)

It is the crown of knowledge. It is the pinnacle of secrets. It is purifying. It is superior. It is the means to learn about the Lord Almighty who powers everyone's sense organs. It is easy to follow and it is the path for eternal bliss. (9.2)

O Parantapa! Those who do not have faith in the knowledge that teaches about the Lord Almighty will not reach the Lord and will keep returning to this mortal worldly life. (9.3)

Comments: The Lord starts His sermon by stating that He will be teaching particularly important and very confidential concepts here. This is to draw the attention of seekers and to generate curiosity in them. Only those who are pure and are devoid of negative attributes such as envy are eligible and able to understand these teachings. The Lord resolves to teach Arjuna both general knowledge that would be available from scriptures (*jnana*) and special, divine knowledge (*vijnana*) which is not easily available. Only those who are sincere in their devotion to the Lord can imbibe such special knowledge, hence it is most secretive.

The Lord imparts this knowledge over the next 16 verses. In 12 verses from (9.4) – (9.15), general knowledge (*jnana*) that would be available from scriptures is taught. The next 4 verses (9.16) – (9.19), contain discussion on special, divine knowledge (*vijnana*).

The Omnipresent, Indwelling Lord

मया ततमिदं सर्वं जगदव्यक्तमूर्तिना ।
मत्स्थानि सर्वभूतानि न चाहं तेष्ववस्थितः ।। ४ ।।
mayā tatam idaṁ sarvaṁ jagad avyaktamūrtinā
matsthāni sarvabhūtāni na cāhaṁ teṣv avasthitaḥ

न च मत्स्थानि भूतानि पश्य मे योगमैश्वरम् ।
भूतभृन्न च भूतस्थो ममात्मा भूतभावनः ।। ५ ।।

na ca matsthāni bhūtāni paśya me yogam aiśvaram
bhūtabhṛn na ca bhūtastho mamātmā bhūtabhāvanaḥ

यथाऽऽकाशस्थितो नित्यं वायुः सर्वत्रगो महान् ।
तथा सर्वाणि भूतानि मत्स्थानीत्युपधारय ॥ ६ ॥

yathākāśasthito nityaṁ vāyuḥ sarvatrago mahān
tathā sarvāṇi bhūtāni matsthānīty upadhāraya

Everything in this universe is pervaded by My unmanifest form which cannot be seen. All inert objects and sentient beings are supported by Me. But I am not dependent on anyone for support. (9.4)

Everything in the universe, including sentient beings and inert objects, even though anchored in Me (Krishna), cannot perceive Me through sense organs (and hence are as good as not anchored in Me). Look at My infinite, divine powers. Even though they are anchored in Me, I do not depend on them. (9.5)

The majestic wind blowing in space is not impacted by the attributes of entities that it comes in contact with. Similarly, even though every living being is anchored in Me, there is no mutual superimposition of attributes. (9.6)

Comments: These three verses provide details on the concept of the Lord's manifestation in every object in the universe; inert and sentient. The Lord is omnipresent and is the supporter for everything in the universe but Himself needs no support by anyone or anything. If the Lord is pervading everywhere, why is He not seen? Verse (9.4) defines the Lord's attribute of *avyakta* (the unmanifest), because of which He is not seen.

Anyone standing on the ground experiences the condition of the ground. For example, if the ground is cool or hot due to the weather, one standing on it will feel the cold or the heat. This is due to the impact of contact between the object that is supported and the object that is providing the support. So, if the Lord is supporting everything in the universe, why is that support not felt physically by the beings in the universe? This is answered in verse (9.5), where it is stated that those who are supported by the Lord cannot perceive Him through their sense organs. This is fundamentally because (unlike the example of the ground), the Lord does not have a physical form made up of material nature but has a transcendental form.

It must be noted in verse (9.5) the Lord uses the term '*mama atma*' (my soul) as the entity that pervades and supports everything in the universe. However, in verse (9.4), the Lord uses the term '*avyakta moorthy*' (unmanifest form) as the entity that pervades and supports everything in the universe. How can these be reconciled? Sri Jaya Teertha in [PD] explains that the reason for using different terminology is to confirm that in the case of the Lord, His form and soul are the same. This is quite different from the case of living beings where the physical form and the soul are different.

The concept in verse (9.5) is illustrated through the example of a gentle breeze in verse (9.6). A gentle, majestic wind blowing in space comes in contact with many objects in its path but does not assume the attributes of those objects. Likewise, even though the Lord pervades everything in the universe and supports everyone in the

universe, His attributes do not get contaminated by entities He comes in contact with. They too cannot imbibe His attributes onto themselves. Some can question the appropriateness of using the wind as an example. When a gently blowing wind is in the vicinity of a fragrant object (say a flower), one who is nearby can smell the fragrance of the flower carried by the wind. How can one say that the wind is not contaminated by the fragrance? Sri Rayaru in [GV] answers by stating that fragrance does not itself become a quality of the wind. The wind stays independent of the fragrance. The particles that constitute fragrance are carried by the wind but do not become an attribute of the wind. Once the wind travels a sufficient distance, the fragrance is no longer present as those particles are dissipated. This proves that the wind itself does not take on the attribute of the fragrance. Hence, the example of the wind is appropriate.

These verses describe the attribute of *Stithi* (sustenance) among the eight major attributes of the Lord referred to in the introduction to this chapter.

Role of the Lord Almighty During Creation and Dissolution

सर्वभूतानि कौन्तेय प्रकृतिं यान्ति मामिकाम् ।
कल्पक्षये पुनस्तानि कल्पादौ विसृजाम्यहम् ।। ७ ।।
sarvabhūtāni kaunteya prakṛtiṁ yānti māmikām
kalpakṣaye punas tāni kalpādau visṛjāmy aham

O Son of Kunti! During the grand dissolution of the universe, all sentient and non-sentient entities will merge with the triumvirate of nature (*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*

attributes) which are under My control. At the start of the next cycle, I will recreate the entities (give them physical forms). (9.7)

Comments: After discussing His attributes of omnipresence and pervasiveness in verses (9.4) – (9.6), the Lord describes His role in the process of creation (*Srishti*) and dissolution (*laya*) of the universe in the next few verses.

The Lord uses the term '*visrujami*' to describe His act of creation of the universe, instead of the usual term '*srujami*'. Sri Rayaru clarifies in [GV] that '*visrujami*' refers to special creation while *srujami* refers to normal creation. This is to indicate the fact that the souls of living beings are eternal and are not subject to creation, and during the time of creation, the Lord gives physical bodies to different souls in different species based on the nature of those souls.

प्रकृतिं स्वामवष्टभ्य विसृजामि पुनः पुनः ।
भूतग्राममिमं कृत्स्नम् अवशं प्रकृतेर्वशात् ॥ ८ ॥
prakṛtiṁ svām avaṣṭabhya visṛjāmi punaḥ punaḥ
bhūtagrāmam imaṁ kṛtsnam avaśaṁ prakṛter vaśāt

The triumvirate of nature is always under My control. Using them as the material cause, I keep creating multitudes of entities (sentient and inert) again and again. (9.8)

Comments: The previous verse stated the Lord's activities of creation and dissolution of the universe. In this verse, the Lord states the procedure that He uses for creation. The Lord utilizes inert nature which is under His

control as the material cause for creation. Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies that the Lord does not need any entity or utility to perform activities, but He uses inert nature for creation out of His free will.

न च मां तानि कर्माणि निबध्नन्ति धनंजय ।
उदासीनवदासीनम् असक्तं तेषु कर्मसु ॥ ९ ॥

na ca māṁ tāni karmāṇi nibadhnanti dhanaṁjaya
udāsīnavad āsīnam asaktaṁ teṣu karmasu

O Dhananjaya! These activities such as creation of the universe can never bind Me. Even though I perform these activities, it is as if I never performed them because of My detachment. (9.9)

Comments: Anyone performing any activity naturally must face consequences for such activity. Is the Lord also bound by His activities such as creation which results in multitudes of entities being born? This verse answers by stating that the Lord is not bound by His actions. There are two reasons for this. One, the Lord does not perform these actions for any gain but rather to help the individual souls on their spiritual journey. Secondly, the Lord Himself controls all activities (*karma*). Therefore, *karma* can never bind the Lord.

Sri Madhwacharya in [GB] explains the context for the use of the word *udaaseena* (meaning indifference) when it comes to the Lord's attitude in performing actions such as creation. It is known that one needs the Lord's grace in order to receive any benefits from Him. Given this, the Lord must have some interest in such activities. How can

He then be indifferent? We can understand this when we see that the word 'indifferent' refers to the Lord's effortless, unattached approach to His activities as He has nothing to gain from them.

मयाऽध्यक्षेण प्रकृतिः सूयते सचराचरम् ।
हेतुनाऽनेन कौन्तेय जगद्विपरिवर्तते ॥ १० ॥
mayādhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ sūyate sacarācaram
hetunānena kaunteya jagad viparivartate

O Son of Kunti! Under My supervision, Mother Nature creates the universe made up of sentient and inert objects. Through mother nature, the universe undergoes the cycle of repeated creation. (9.10)

Comments: If the Lord indeed shows indifference in the process of creation of the Universe as stated in the previous verse, does it mean that the Lord has no interest in or oversight on this activity? This verse counters this question by stating that the process of creation and indeed all His activities occur under His supervision which is implied by the use of the word *adhyaksha*. Sri Rayaru explains in [GV] that *adhyaksha* means one who is overseeing or supervising the activity as *aksha* means seeing. The process of creation is performed by sentient Mother Nature (Sri Lakshmi) using inert nature under the supervision and control of the Lord. In summary, while the Lord performs creation using sentient and insentient nature without effort or attachment, He supervises and oversees the process.

This verse describes the attribute of *Niyamana* (regulation) among the eight major attributes of the Lord referred to in the introduction to this chapter, as the Lord

is seen to be supervising and overseeing the process of creation.

The Ignorant and the Arrogant Underestimate the Lord

अवजानन्ति मां मूढा मानुषीं तनुमाश्रितम् ।
परं भावमजानन्तो मम भूतमहेश्वरम् ।। ११ ।।
avajānanti māṁ mūḍhā mānuṣīṁ tanum āśritam
paraṁ bhāvam ajānanto mama bhūtamaheśvaram

मोघाशा मोघकर्माणो मोघज्ञाना विचेतसः ।
राक्षसीमासुरीं चैव प्रकृतिं मोहिनीं श्रिताः ।। १२ ।।
moghāśā moghakarmāṇo moghajñānā vicetasaḥ
rākṣasīm āsurīṁ caiva prakṛtiṁ mohinīṁ śritāḥ

Ignorant fools are unaware that I (Krishna) am the Supreme being, eternal and full of infinite auspicious attributes. They insult Me by considering Me as having a human like body (subject to decay and death). (9.11)

Those with demoniac natures have their intellect clouded with ignorance. Their desires for heaven will not be realized. Their rituals and sacrifices are a wasted effort. They will not attain true spiritual knowledge and they are senseless. (9.12)

Comments: Since the Lord, who has infinite powers is responsible for the creation, sustenance, and dissolution of the universe and for granting physical bodies to all souls, why is it that some consider Him the same as other human beings? And why are there no consequences for those who are insulting the ever compassionate Lord? These two verses provide the answers. Ignorant ones look at the

Lord's incarnations such as Rama, Vamana, Krishna etc., and assume that the Lord too has a human like body. They are not able to comprehend the Lord's infinite attributes and strength. The reason for their ignorance is their innate nature which the Lord describes using the word '*prakrutim*' (by nature). Some even have hatred towards the Lord. Such demoniac people will not achieve any lasting rewards or spiritual knowledge, and hence will not be able to perform any activity that would lead to liberation.

In the epic [BMP] **Bhagavata Maha Purana** (7th canto, 7-1-32), there is a discussion on Shishupala (the king of Chedi and a known adversary of Krishna) who hurled many abuses at the Lord and was killed by Him. As per [BMP], ultimately Shishupala achieves *moksha*. Some interpret this to mean that even those who constantly hate the Lord are thinking about Him incessantly and hence are eligible for *moksha*. It is clarified in Sri Madhwacharya's [MBTN] verse 21-259, and [BTN] verse 7-1-32, that Shishupala actually had two separate souls resident in his body. One was the pious soul of Jaya (one of the doorkeepers of the Lord's abode) and the other was that of a demon. Due to a curse, Jaya had to endure being in Shishupala's body. When Shishupala was killed by Lord Krishna, Jaya attained the Lord, while the demoniac soul was relegated to eternal hell.

Nature of Lord's Devotees

महात्मानस्तु मां पार्थ दैवीं प्रकृतिमाश्रिताः ।
भजन्त्यनन्यमनसो ज्ञात्वा भूतादिमव्ययम् ॥ १३ ॥

mahātmānas tu māṁ pārtha daivīṁ prakṛtim āśritāḥ
bhajanty ananyamanaso jñātvā bhūtādim avyayam

O Partha! Pious people know Me as the root cause of everything in the universe and one who has a never-ending existence. They worship Me single mindedly. (9.13)

Comments: If some view the Lord as human like (as stated in verse 9.11), could that be due to the Lord having human like attributes? This verse answers that question by stating that if that were so, even those with divine nature should consider the Lord as human like. But that is not the case. Those with divine nature know the Lord as being responsible for the existence of all entities in the universe and that He Himself is not subject to decay. They worship the Lord single mindedly. Sri Rayaru in [GV] explains that the Lord is not subject to fourfold decay – (i) in the physical body (as He has a transcendental body), (ii) in the soul (as no soul is subject to decay), (iii) in attributes (as the Lord is full of infinite auspicious attributes) and (iv) in happiness (as He is always devoid of misery). The concept of fourfold decay was explained in verse (2.18). This verse describes true knowledge (*jnana*) that is characteristic of pious souls.

सततं कीर्तयन्तो मां यतन्तश्च दृढव्रताः ।
नमस्यन्तश्च मां भक्त्या नित्ययुक्ता उपासते ।। १४ ।।
satataṁ kīrtayanto māṁ yatantaś ca dṛḍhavratāḥ
namasyantaś ca māṁ bhaktyā nityayuktā upāsate

ज्ञानयज्ञेन चाप्यन्ये यजन्तो मामुपासते ।
एकत्वेन पृथक्त्वेन बहुधा विश्वतोमुखम् ।। १५ ।।
jñānayajñena cāpy anye yajanto mām upāsate
ekatvena pṛthaktvena bahudhā viśvatomukham

Such pious souls worship Me (Krishna) in various ways – through constant singing of My glories, through involvement in strict rituals such as fasting, through constant meditation and through constant salutations to Me. They strive hard to achieve spiritual knowledge and worship Me with great devotion. (9.14)

Some seekers worship Me through the sacrifice of knowledge (listening, analyzing, and contemplating on spiritual knowledge). Some worship My primary form (Narayana), or My various forms (Vasudeva etc.) knowing that all these forms are identical and that I am omnipresent, with infinite forms. (9.15)

Comments: In verse (9.13), it was stated that pious souls worship the Lord with the knowledge that He has a never-ending existence. In these two verses, the path of worship is described. Some worship the primary form of the Lord as Narayana, others worship the various forms that originated from Narayana such as the four forms of Aniruddha, Pradyumna, Sankarshana, Vasudeva, and the twenty-four forms that start from Keshava (multifaceted worship). The Lord is same in all His forms. Further, the Lord is different from other entities such as individual souls and inert objects as indicated through the use of the word *prithak* meaning different. Sri Rayaru in [GV] indicates another interpretation of the multifaceted worship of the Lord as the different types of sacrifices performed by seekers which was stated previously in chapter 4 (4.25).

अहं क्रतुरहं यज्ञः स्वधाऽहमहमौषधम् ।
मन्त्रोऽहमहमेवाज्यम् अहमग्निरहं हुतम् ।। १६ ।।

ahaṁ kratur ahaṁ yajñaḥ svadhāham aham auṣadham
mantro aham aham evājyam aham agnir ahaṁ hutam

पिताऽहमस्य जगतो माता धाता पितामहः ।
वेद्यं पवित्रमोंकार ऋक्साम यजुरेव च ।। १७ ।।
pitāham asya jagato mātā dhātā pitāmahaḥ
vedyaṁ pavitram oṁkāra ṛk sāma yajur eva ca

I am the action of sacrifice. I am the ritual sacrifice. I am the offering to departed elders. I am the healing herb. I am the hymn. I am ghee offered in sacrifice. I am the ritual fire. I am the offering. (9.16)

I am the father, mother, supporter, worshipful grandfather of this universe. I am the subject of all knowledge and everything that is holy. I am postulated by the primordial holy syllable '*Om*' and the infinite **Vedas** - Rik, Sama and Yajur (9.17)

Comments: In verse (9.1), the Lord resolves to impart to Arjuna both general knowledge – *jnana* (obtainable through scriptures) and also very, special knowledge (*vijnana*) about the Lord Almighty. The Lord described such general knowledge in 12 verses from (9.4) to (9.15). In the next four verses (9.16) to (9.19), the Lord teaches special, divine knowledge (*vijnana*) which identifies the Lord's presence in all entities, all activities, all sounds and indeed in everything.

In verse (9.16), the Lord states His presence in all activities and entities that pertain to a seeker performing a fire ritual to please Him. By stating that He was the ritual sacrifice, the Lord is indicating that He controls and stimulates the act of a seeker performing a fire ritual.

Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies that one should not attach peripheral meaning to the activities and entities indicated

here, but rather focus on their hidden, inner, spiritual meaning. With this approach the activities and entities where the Lord indicates His presence and ownership are as follows: father= responsible for one's birth; mother = responsible for one's birth; supporter = supports and sustains the universe; grandfather = worthy of worship; knowable = worthy of being known; holy = cause of holiness in holy objects; symbol *Om*= full of infinite, auspicious attributes; rik = worthy of respect; sama = Equal presence in His various forms; yajur = worshipped by everyone.

गतिर्भर्ता प्रभुः साक्षी निवासः शरणं सुहृत् ।
प्रभवः प्रलयः स्थानं निधानं बीजमव्ययम् ।। १८।।
gatir bhartā prabhuḥ sākṣī nivāsaḥ śaraṇaṁ suhṛt
prabhavaḥ pralayaḥ sthānaṁ nidhānaṁ bījam avyam

I am the destination (for those seeking liberation). I provide for everyone. I am the owner of everything. I am the witness for everything. I am the refuge for everyone. I am the protector for everyone. I am the true friend for everyone. Creation is from Me. Dissolution is from Me. I am the cause for the existence of everyone and everything. I am the imperishable, primordial seed. (9.18)

Comments: In this verse the Lord continues to identify some major activities, entities, and attributes that He is responsible for. In many instances those who achieve liberation are referred to as having reached the Lord. In this verse, the Lord states that He is indeed the destination for those seeking liberation. The Lord is also known as *nidhana*, meaning 'one into whom the universe dissolves'. In verse (9.7), it is stated that the universe dissolves into

nature. Sri Rayaru clarifies in [GV], that as nature itself is supported by the Lord, it is appropriate for the Lord to be identified with the act of dissolution. The Lord also uses the qualifier *avyayam* when referring to the primordial seed to distinguish the Lord's nature as being imperishable in comparison with the seed in the material world that is subject to change and destruction. Sri Raghuttama Teertha in his [PDBB] clarifies that the word '*nivāsaḥ*' (refuge) here applies to those who are already liberated and those who are seeking liberation.

तपाम्यहमहं वर्षं निगृह्णाम्युत्सृजामि च ।
अमृतं चैव मृत्युश्च सदसच्चाहमर्जुन ॥ १९ ॥
tapāmy aham ahaṁ varṣaṁ nigṛṇhāmy utsṛjāmi ca
amṛtaṁ caiva mṛtyuś ca sad asac cāham arjuna

O Arjuna! Residing in the Sun, I am the cause of heat and light. I cause clouds to rain and I also cause the rain to cease. I prevent someone from dying (by supporting the sense organs and the body) and I am also the cause of death. I am the cause and effect of all activities. (9.19)

Comments: The Lord identifies His role in granting powers to entities, such as heat and light to the Sun. The Lord is also known as *sat* and *asat*. Sri Rayaru explains two different sets of interpretations for these words. *Sat* and *asat* mean *group of activities* and *the reason for the group of activities*, respectively. *Sat* also means one who is supreme. The Lord is also known as *asat* as this refers to one for whom there is no superior entity. This interpretation is supported by *Shabda Nirnaya* as indicated by Sri Madhwacharya in [GTN].

Ritual Practitioners v/s Unconditional Devotees

त्रैविद्या मां सोमपाः पूतपापा
यज्ञैरिष्ट्वा स्वर्गतिं प्रार्थयन्ते ।
ते पुण्यमासाद्य सुरेन्द्रलोकम्
अश्नन्ति दिव्यान् दिवि देवभोगान् ॥ २० ॥

traividyā māṁ somapāḥ pūtapāpā yajñair iṣṭvā svargatiṁ prārthayante
te puṇyam āsādya surendralokaṁ aśnanti divyān divi devabhogān

ते तं भुक्त्वा स्वर्गलोकं विशालं
क्षीणे पुण्ये मर्त्यलोकं विशन्ति ।
एवं त्रयीधर्ममनुप्रपन्ना
गतागतं कामकामा लभन्ते ॥ २१ ॥

te taṁ bhuktvā svargalokaṁ viśālaṁ kṣīṇe puṇye martyalokaṁ viśanti
evaṁ trayīdharmam anuprapannā gatāgataṁ kāmakāmā labhante

Those with superficial (and literal) knowledge of the three **Vedas**, propitiate Me with Vedic rituals and crave for heavenly riches. Based on their good deeds, they attain the heaven presided by deity Indra and enjoy the luxuries therein. (9.20)

They indulge in enjoying luxuries in expansive heavenly worlds, and after exhausting their credits from good deeds (*punya*), are reborn in this world. Focused only on the superficial aspects of the **Vedas** they perform rituals seeking heavenly pleasure and are stuck in this cycle. (9.21)

Comments: In the next few verses, the Lord explains the difference in rewards experienced by ritualists (those who perform Vedic rituals with expectation of specific outcomes), and His unconditional devotees. Later, verse 9.24 indicates that the Lord consumes the fruits of all rituals whether they are performed by ritualists or unconditional devotees. If that is so, why is there a difference in the final reward? The difference is due to the approach and attitude in performing such rituals. Ritualists perform Vedic rituals to propitiate other deities with expectation of rewards such as worldly riches while on earth, heavenly worlds hereafter etc. They do submit all rituals to the Lord Himself, but their activities are not without expectation. On the other hand, unconditional devotees of the Lord perform all activities as an offering to the Lord with utmost devotion and without any expectations. The difference in final rewards is due to the difference in their approach. Previously in verse (7.23), it was indicated that ritualists only experience temporary fruits. These two verses clarify the meaning of temporary fruits by stating that ritualists do reach the heavenly worlds hereafter, enjoy the privileges there and after exhaustion of credits eventually return to earth (in another birth).

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।
तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥ २२ ॥
ananyāś cintayanto māṁ ye janāḥ paryupāsate
teṣāṁ nityābhiyuktānāṁ yogakṣemaṁ vahāmy aham

Some exclusively worship Me with devotion, leaving aside all other thoughts and serve Me wholeheartedly

with their body and mind. I take responsibility to grant their wishes and safeguard blessings they have already earned. (9.22)

Comments: This verse explains the rewards experienced by unconditional devotees of the Lord. They worship the Lord single mindedly without any expectations. The Lord grants them permanent bliss. This is indicated using the phrase '*yoga kshema'* where *yoga* refers to attaining something that one does not yet possess, and *kshema* refers to the state of retaining what is attained. Sri Rayaru in [GV] explains that *yoga* here refers to attaining liberation (state of bliss) and *kshema* refers to retaining that state permanently (eternal bliss).

This verse is identified as the single verse that represents this entire chapter by Sri Madinur Vishnu Teertha in his [BGS], as unconditional devotion to the Lord is the ultimate form of prayer that a seeker needs to perform to achieve liberation.

येऽप्यन्यदेवता भक्ता यजन्ते श्रद्धयाऽन्विताः ।
तेऽपि मामेव कौन्तेय यजन्त्यविधिपूर्वकम् ।। २३ ।।
yepy anyadevatābhaktā yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ
tepi mām eva kaunteya yajanty avidhipūrvakam

अहं हि सर्वयज्ञानां भोक्ता च प्रभुरेव च ।
न तु मामभिजानन्ति तत्त्वेनातश्च्यवन्ति ते ।। २४ ।।
ahaṁ hi sarvayajñānāṁ bhoktā ca prabhur eva ca
na tu mām abhijānanti tattvenātaś cyavanti te

यान्ति देवव्रता देवान् पितॄन् यान्ति पितृव्रताः ।
भूतानि यान्ति भूतेज्या यान्ति मद्याजिनोऽपि माम् ।। २५ ।।

yānti devavratā devān pitṛn yānti pitṛvratāḥ
bhūtāni yānti bhūtejyā yānti madyājinopi mām

O Son of Kunti! Those who worship other deities with sincerity are in fact worshipping Me alone, but in an indirect, unauthorized manner. (9.23)

I am indeed the consumer as well as the Lord of all worships and sacrifices. Those who are ignorant of this principle, propitiate other deities and keep going back and forth between this mundane world and the heavenly world. (9.24)

Those who propitiate heavenly deities reach the respective deities. Those who worship the ancestral deities reach them as well. However, those who worship Me exclusively reach My abode, never to return. (9.25)

Comments: These verses clarify that even for those who only worship other deities, the fruits of their worship are granted by the Lord Himself as He is the ultimate object and controller of all worships and sacrifices. Given that the Lord is indeed the object of all worship, why is there a difference in the rewards for ritualists and unconditional devotees? The difference is due to the approach of these two types of worshippers. What is the reason for the difference in their approach? Verse 9.24 states that ritualists are not fully aware that the Lord is indeed the object of all worship which causes them to approach other deities for quick results. Further, verse (9.25) clarifies that ritualists reach the heavenly abodes of the respective deities of their propitiation.

The Lord is Easy to Please

पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति ।
तदहं भक्त्युपहृतमश्नामि प्रयतात्मनः ॥ २६ ॥

patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyaṁ yo me bhaktyā prayacchati
tad ahaṁ bhaktyupahṛtam aśnāmi prayatātmanaḥ

Whatever a devotee offers Me with sincere devotion, whether it is a leaf, a flower, some fruit, or water, I accept such devout offerings of the striving souls. (9.26)

Comments: As the Lord is supreme and is the eventual object of all worship and sacrifices, is it possible that ritualists view the worship of the Lord Almighty as exceedingly difficult and hence propitiate other, lesser deities? This verse clarifies that there is no difficulty involved in worshipping the Lord who does not expect any grand worship. He expects sincerity and unconditional devotion. Anything offered from such devotees even if it is a leaf or a flower or a fruit or even water is gladly accepted from the Lord. This again proves that the attitude of ritualists in resorting to indirect worship of the Lord is due to their lack of understanding of His true attributes.

In great epics such as the **Mahabharata,** the **Ramayana**, and the **Bhagavata,** the Lord is seen accepting with pleasure even ordinary substances such as a leftover leaf (as in the case of Draupadi) or a flower (as in the case of Gajendra) or a fruit (as in the case of Shabari). Sri Vidyamanya Teertha in his [GPM] offers an interesting interpretation of this verse. *Leaf* here refers to the **Vedas** (as per Gita (15.1) where the **Vedas** are compared to the leaf of a Banyan tree which represents the universe) and

hence worship with a leaf means worshipping the Lord through proper understanding of the **Vedas**. *Flower* refers to non-violence among the eight flowers that are dear to the Lord as per the scriptural saying *ahimsa prathamam pushpam*. The other seven flowers are - self-control, compassion to all beings, forgiveness, knowledge, penance, truth, and *dhyana* meditation. Offering *some fruit* refers to the act of performing duties without any expectations of rewards. Offering water refers to the teary eyes that one experiences as a result of intense, unconditional prayer to the Lord.

Submit Everything to the Lord

यत्करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत् ।
यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत् कुरुष्व मदर्पणम् ।। २७ ।।
yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat
yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kuruṣva madarpaṇam

शुभाशुभफलैरेवं मोक्ष्यसे कर्मबन्धनैः ।
सन्न्यासयोगयुक्तात्मा विमुक्तो मामुपैष्यसि ।। २८ ।।
śubhāśubhaphalair evaṁ mokṣyase karmabandhanaiḥ
saṁnyāsayogayuktātmā vimukto mām upaiṣyasi

O Son of Kunti! Whatever you do, whatever you consume, whatever sacrifice or ritual you perform and whatever penance you undertake, offer them all to Me. (9.27)

By doing this you will not be bound by the effects of activities, which otherwise have either positive or negative outcomes. By performing prescribed duties, without expectations, you will be released from worldly bondage and reach My abode. (9.28)

Comments: In verse 9.26, it was stated that the Lord is easy to please and will accept even ordinary substances offered with sincerity and devotion. Verse 9.27 states that in addition to whatever material substances one offers to the Lord, it is also important to submit any worshipful activities that are performed such as ritual sacrifice, charity, austerity etc., also as an offering to the Lord. Doing so will release a devotee from any side effects from activities performed and will pave the way for liberation.

Verse (9.28) describes the attributes of bondage (*bandha*) and liberation (*moksha*) which are part of the eight attributes indicated earlier.

समोऽहं सर्वभूतेषु न मे द्वेष्योऽस्ति न प्रियः ।
ये भजन्ति तु मां भक्त्या मयि ते तेषु चाप्यहम् ।।२९।।
samohaṁ sarvabhūteṣu na me dveṣyosti na priyaḥ
ye bhajanti tu māṁ bhaktyā mayi te teṣu cāpy aham

I treat all beings equally. I have no friends or enemies. Those who worship Me with devotion are supported by Me and I will protect them. (9.29)

Comments: The Lord treats everyone impartially with equality. Equality here implies reciprocity. The Lord's grace is proportional to one's devotion and likewise, His wrath is also proportional to one's misdeeds. The Lord never hates sincere devotees and likewise, He never protects enemies who knowingly hate Him.

अपि चेत् सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक् ।
साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः सम्यग् व्यवसितो हि सः ।। ३०।।
api cet sudurācāro bhajate mām ananyabhāk
sādhur eva sa mantavyaḥ samyag vyavasito hi saḥ

क्षिप्रं भवति धर्मात्मा शश्वच्छान्तिं निगच्छति ।
कौन्तेय प्रतिजानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति ।। ३१ ।।
kṣipraṁ bhavati dharmātmā śaśvacchāntiṁ nigacchhati
kaunteya pratijānīhi na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati

One who worships Me with utmost devotion is to be considered a pious person even if that person has previously committed sinful activities. Such a person has resolved right. (9.30)

Such a person will immediately focus his/her mind back on righteous activities and will be in the path of eternal bliss. O Son of Kunti! My devotees will never be harmed. (9.31)

Comments: The supremacy of devotion is exemplified in these verses. A similar concept was discussed previously in verse 4.36 where it was indicated that right knowledge will absolve even those who are indulging in misdeeds. Here the Lord is clarifying that such people who have conviction in the Lord Almighty's supremacy over all other deities and indeed over everything in the universe, will soon get back on the right track and achieve His grace. The discussion here applies to pious souls who due to various reasons such as a curse have strayed onto the wrong path.

Souls eligible for liberation who have indulged in sinful activities will have to pay for their misdeeds (such as misery in hell) but due to their innate nature will eventually get back to the right path, develop devotion to the Lord and achieve liberation. Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies that deities and sages who by nature are pious (*sattvic*) may also indulge in misdeeds. This could happen

when they have accumulated positive credits (*punya*) beyond their eligibility. They would then experience a reduction in such credits by indulging in misdeeds out of compulsion such as a curse. They would however not have to experience hell as their misdeeds were beyond their control.

मां हि पार्थ व्यपाश्रित्य येऽपि स्युः पापयोनयः ।
स्त्रियो वैश्यास्तथा शूद्रास्तेऽपि यान्ति परां गतिम् ।। ३२ ।।
māṁ hi pārtha vyapāśritya yepi syuḥ pāpayonayaḥ
striyo vaiśyās tathā śūdrās tepi yānti parāṁ gatim

किं पुनर्ब्राह्मणाः पुण्या भक्ता राजर्षयस्तथा ।
अनित्यमसुखं लोकम् इमं प्राप्य भजस्व माम् ।। ३३ ।।
kiṁ punar brāhmaṇāḥ puṇyā bhaktā rājarṣayas tathā
anityam asukhaṁ lokam imaṁ prāpya bhajasva mām

O Partha! Even those who, due to sins committed in previous births or due to a curse, are born in less hospitable, disadvantageous environments, will achieve eternal bliss through their faith in Me. (9.32)

It is obvious that those who are born in virtuous families and holy environments will reach Me through their faith. As you are in this transitory, distressful world, worship Me without delay to reach your spiritual goal. (9.33)

Comments: Every soul has natural attributes based on which it would take birth to play a specific role in society. Sometimes due to sins committed in prior births or due to a curse, it is possible for someone to be born in less hospitable, disadvantageous circumstances where they

might not have easy access to education, spiritual learning etc. Even those souls can achieve liberation through faith and unflinching devotion to the Lord. It goes without saying that others who are fortunate to have been born in advantageous circumstances (such as birth in pious families, kingly families etc.) are able to access spiritual education, develop faith in the Lord and achieve liberation. Krishna advises Arjuna to make use of the opportunity of his human birth in this transitory and distressful world and perform his prescribed duties with devotion to Him without delay. This is a message that applies to the entire human race.

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।
मामेवैष्यसि युक्त्वैवम् आत्मानं मत्परायणः ।। ३४ ।।
manmanā bhava madbhakto madyājī māṁ namaskuru
mām evaiṣyasi yuktvaivam ātmānaṁ matparāyaṇaḥ

Focus your mind exclusively on Me (Krishna). Be devoted only to Me. Worship only Me. Surrender to Me through prostration. Thus, by depending exclusively on Me, you will reach My abode. (9.34)

Comments: The Lord concludes the discussion in this unique chapter by exhorting Arjuna to focus his mind, and worship, propitiate and honour Him exclusively. The reward for such exclusive devotion to the Lord is liberation (*mukti*). As this chapter was focused on the discussion of the Lord's special attributes, in the concluding verse the Lord encourages Arjuna to develop devotion to Him after getting convinced about His greatness.

Summary of Chapter 9

While the Lord has infinite auspicious forms, attributes, activities etc., there are eight activities of the Lord that directly impact living beings. They are – creation (*srishti*), sustenance (*sthiti)*, dissolution (*laya*), regulation (*niyamana*), knowledge (*jnana*), ignorance (*ajnana*), bondage (*bandha*), and liberation (*moksha*). Together they are called *Janmadi ashtaka* and they are covered in this chapter. This chapter is called '*Raja Vidya Yoga*' as it teaches these important concepts about the Lord. The Lord provides the context for the teachings in this chapter in verses (9.1), (9.2), and (9.3) where He resolves to impart both general knowledge (acquired through scriptures - *jnana*) and special, divine knowledge about Himself (*vijnana*). The attribute of *sthiti* (sustenance) among the eight major attributes of the Lord as they relate to living beings is covered in verses (9.4) – (9.6). In verses 9.7 and 9.8, the Lord's attributes of creation (*srishti*) and dissolution (*laya*) are covered and in 9.10, His attribute of regulation (*niyamana*) of the universe is discussed. Verse 9.13 describes the attribute of knowledge (*jnana*) as it pertains to pious souls, and verses (9.11), (9.12) pertain to the attribute of false knowledge (*ajnana*) of demoniac souls. In verse (9.1), the Lord resolved to impart Arjuna both the *jnana* general knowledge – obtainable through scriptures and also very special knowledge about Himself (*vijnana*). The Lord describes such general knowledge in 12 verses from (9.4) to (9.15) and in four verses (9.16) to (9.19), the Lord instructs special, divine knowledge (*vijnana*) which identifies His presence in all entities, all activities, all sounds and indeed in everything. In verses (9.20) to (9.25), the Lord explains the difference in

rewards experienced by ritualists (those who perform Vedic rituals with expectations on outcome), and His unconditional devotees. The supremacy of the path of devotion is described in verses (9.26) – (9.29). Verse (9.28) alludes to the attributes of bondage (*bandha*) and liberation (*moksha*). Verses (9.30) – (9.31) state that even if pious souls indulge in misdeeds (due to some compulsion such as a curse) they will eventually get back to the right path and move towards liberation. In (9.34) the Lord concludes this chapter by instructing Arjuna to focus his mind exclusively on Him, since performing prescribed duties with unconditional devotion will lead one to liberation.

॥ इति नवमोऽध्यायः ॥

End of Chapter 9

दशमोऽध्यायः – विभूतियोगः
Chapter 10 - Divine Manifestations

Chapter Introduction: Number ten signifies fullness. It is very fitting that the Lord details His greatness in this tenth chapter of 42 verses. In the 6th chapter, the Lord provided details of *dhyana* meditation, and in the last verse of Chapter 9 the Lord taught that one should concentrate and focus the mind exclusively on Him to achieve everlasting bliss (*moksha*). For one to develop such firm conviction in meditation, one needs to be fully aware of the Lord's greatness and attributes. It is also necessary for one to develop a mental picture of the Lord to focus the mind during meditation. The Lord details many of His glorious forms from verse (10.21) to (10.38), to aid in meditation. Some of the Lord's attributes and special presence in activities and entities were briefly described in (5.29), (7.8), (9.16) etc. More details on these concepts are provided in this grand chapter.

The Lord's Great Qualities

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
भूय एव महाबाहो शृणु मे परमं वचः ।
यत्तेऽहं प्रीयमाणाय वक्ष्यामि हितकाम्यया ॥ १ ॥

śrībhagavānuvāca
bhūya eva mahābāho śṛṇu me paramaṁ vacaḥ
yat tehaṁ prīyamāṇāya vakṣyāmi hitakāmyayā

The Lord said:

O Arjuna, Mighty Armed One! Listen to some more of My paramount qualities. I will speak unto you for your welfare as you will delight in them. (10.1)

Comments: The Lord clarifies that Arjuna, being of a pious nature, values knowing about His greatness and will listen to His sermon attentively. Hence, the Lord chose Arjuna to teach about His paramount attributes.

न मे विदुः सुरगणाः प्रभवं न महर्षयः ।
अहमादिर्हि देवानां महर्षीणां च सर्वशः ।। २ ।।
na me viduḥ suragaṇāḥ prabhavaṁ na maharṣayaḥ
aham ādir hi devānāṁ maharṣīṇāṁ ca sarvaśaḥ

Even groups of deities and great sages do not have complete knowledge of My paramount qualities or about the creation of this universe. I am the reason for the existence of all deities, all sages and indeed every being, and I am beginningless. (10.2)

Comments: The Lord states that even deities and great sages do not know about His greatness and powers completely, which implies that no one in the universe knows the Lord fully. By stating that He is the cause for the creation of the universe and indeed for everyone's existence, it is clear that the Lord Himself has no creator. He existed always and will continue to exist forever. Sri Rayaru in [GV] cautions that one should not conclude that the reason for not knowing about His beginning is due the difficulty in obtaining such knowledge. The fact is that He is birthless and He always existed. This is different from the incomplete knowledge that one has about His act of creation which actually occurred, but one cannot completely comprehend. Sri Rayaru provides three interpretations based on Sri Madhwacharya's [GB] for the phrase '*na me vidhuhu*' (no one knows Me) as follows- (i) deities and great sages do not understand My greatness

fully; (ii) deities and great sages do not understand My act of the creation of the universe completely; (iii) deities and great sages do not fully understand that I have no beginning. Sri Rayaru also quotes a **Brahma Sutra** (2.3.9) which states that the Lord is birthless and hence has no beginning.

यो मामजमनादिं च वेत्ति लोकमहेश्वरम् ।
असंमूढः स मर्त्येषु सर्वपापैः प्रमुच्यते ॥ ३ ॥
yo mām ajam anādiṁ ca vetti lokamaheśvaram
asaṁmūḍhaḥ sa martyeṣu sarvapāpaiḥ pramucyate

One who knows Me as eternal, not subject to birth, the controller and activator of everything and everyone, the root cause for the existence of the universe, and the Supreme Leader is never deluded. Such a person will be freed from all sins. (10.3)

Comments: The word *anadi* has an interesting interpretation by Sri Rayaru in [GV]. A superficial meaning of *anadi* is one without beginning. However, the Lord precedes this word by *ajam* (one without birth) which also means one without beginning. Dividing the word *anadi* as *ana* and *adi* leads to two interpretations. *Ana* means activity, *adi* is beginning, so *anadi* means the one who is the cause of activity in everyone. Also, *ana* means the deity *mukhya prana (vayudeva)* and hence *anadi* can also be interpreted as the one who existed even before the deity *mukhya prana*. This interpretation is also consistent with the Vedic quote in the **Purusha Sookta** which states – *pranaad vayur ajayatha* (during the process of creation, the deity Vayudeva arose out of the Lord's breath).

बुद्धिर्ज्ञानमसंमोहः क्षमा सत्यं दमः शमः ।
सुखं दुःखं भवोऽभावो भयं चाभयमेव च ॥ ४ ॥
buddhir jñānam asaṁmohaḥ kṣamā satyaṁ damaḥ śamaḥ
sukhaṁ duḥkhaṁ bhavobhāvo bhayaṁ cābhayam eva ca

अहिंसा समता तुष्टिस्तपो दानं यशोऽयशः ।
भवन्ति भावा भूतानां मत्त एव पृथग्विधाः ॥ ५ ॥
ahiṁsā samatā tuṣṭis tapo dānaṁ yaśoyaśaḥ
bhavanti bhāvā bhūtānāṁ matta eva pṛthagvidhāḥ

I alone provide all the qualities to living beings such as intelligence, right knowledge, non-illusion, forgiveness, truthfulness, control over the sense organs and the mind, deep devotion to the Lord, happiness, sadness, birth, death, fear, fearlessness, non-violence, equanimity under pleasure or pain, contentment, austerity, charity, fame, infamy and so on. (10.4) (10.5)

Comments: After having declared Himself as the subject of knowledge that leads one to liberation, the Lord describes the various attributes and emotions that He equips all living beings with to help them in their livelihood and spiritual journey. The Lord not only provides living beings with physical bodies and sense organs to conduct their lives, He also enables them with various faculties and emotions to complete their personalities.

महर्षयः सप्त पूर्वे चत्वारो मनवस्तथा ।
मद्भावा मानसा जाता येषां लोक इमाः प्रजाः ॥ ६ ॥
maharṣayaḥ sapta pūrve catvāro manavas tathā
madbhāvā mānasā jātā yeṣāṁ loka imāḥ prajāḥ

During the period of the previous Manu, I created the seven great sages, the deities who emanated from the mind of Brahma, and the four Manu deities. Their progeny in turn populated the universe. (10.6)

Comments: The Lord stated previously that He is the cause for the creation of all living beings. Here He is describing the details of such a creation. The Lord initially created the seven great sages (Mareechi, Atri, Angeerasa, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Vasishta). Sri Rayaru in [GV] explains that Manu also means one endowed with knowledge and hence Manu deities also are all deities starting from four faced Brahma. The Lord initially created Brahma and through him all other deities were created. The progeny of the seven sages and the deities then populated the universe. The reference to four types of Manu deities indicate the categorization of deities into four categories similar to humans beings described previously in chapter 4 (4.13). *Brahmanas, kshatriyas, vyshyas* and *shudras* are the four classes of deities. Brahma belongs to the category of Brahmana. Deities such as Vayudeva, Seshadeva, Rudradeva, Garuda, Indra are Kshatriyas etc. It was clarified in (4.13) that the four categories in society are based on the innate nature and talent of souls and, no category is superior to another. In fact (4.13) uses the word *varna* which means colour. Thus, the four categories are different like colours of different and one should not confuse them with the caste system prevalent in society. The fact that these types of categories exist even among deities is proof that one should not grade people based on their classification.

एतां विभूतिं योगं च मम यो वेत्ति तत्त्वतः ।
सोऽविकम्पेन योगेन युज्यते नात्र संशयः ।। ७ ।।
etāṁ vibhūtiṁ yogaṁ ca mama yo vetti tattvataḥ
sovikampena yogena yujyate nātra saṁśayaḥ

One who is properly aware of My majesty and supremacy will be accomplished in steadfast meditation. There should be no doubt about this. (10.7)

Comments: The Lord described some of His attributes and greatness in verses (10.2) to (10.6) and in this verse He declares that one who properly understands His majesty and supremacy will develop the ability for concentrated meditation on Him, which eventually leads to liberation.

अहं सर्वस्य प्रभवो मत्तः सर्वं प्रवर्तते ।
इति मत्वा भजन्ते मां बुधा भावसमन्विताः ।। ८ ।।
ahaṁ sarvasya prabhavo mattaḥ sarvaṁ pravartate
iti matvā bhajante māṁ budhā bhāvasamanvitāḥ

मच्चित्ता मद्गतप्राणा बोधयन्तः परस्परम् ।
कथयन्तश्च मां नित्यं तुष्यन्ति च रमन्ति च ।। ९ ।।
maccittā madgataprāṇā bodhayantaḥ parasparam
kathayantaś ca māṁ nityaṁ tuṣyanti ca ramanti ca

Learned ones understand Me as responsible for all creation and as the regulator of all activities. They worship Me with deep devotion. (10.8)

Learned ones focus their minds on Me, absorb their body and sense organs in My service, teach their students

about Me, discuss My prowess with others, dance and rejoice in My glory while feeling fully contented. (10.9)

Comments: In these verses, the Lord describes the manner in which learned ones identified in verse (10.7) worship and serve Him. Learned ones not only rejoice in their divine knowledge, but they also impart such knowledge to others and engage in spiritual discussions to help others develop conviction in the Lord's activities, greatness, and prowess.

तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकम् ।
ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन मामुपयान्ति ते ॥ १० ॥
teṣāṁ satatayuktānāṁ bhajatāṁ prītipūrvakam
dadāmi buddhiyogaṁ taṁ yena mām upayānti te

For those who immerse their minds in Me and worship Me with affection, I grant wisdom with which they are able to attain My abode. (10.10)

Comments: In this verse the Lord states that He rewards His devotees with the knowledge and wisdom they need in order to achieve liberation. His devotees who worship Him with single minded focus (described in verses 10.7 – 10.9), having understood His greatness (summarized in verses 10.2 – 10.6), are accordingly rewarded.

This verse is identified as the summary of this entire chapter by Sri Madinur Vishnu Teertha in his [BGS] as it summarizes the reward for a seeker who truly understands the Lord's prowess. This is explained in more detail in later verses.

Author's Note: There is a curious mathematical aspect to this verse. This 10th verse in this 10th chapter has 10 words! It was stated in the introduction that the number 10 stands for fullness. Also, 10*10*10 = 1000 symbolizes the 1000 names of the Lord as in the **Vishnu Sahasra Nama**. It is very apt that this verse is considered to be a summary of this chapter.

तेषामेवानुकम्पार्थम् अहमज्ञानजं तमः ।
नाशयाम्यात्मभावस्थो ज्ञानदीपेन भास्वता ।। ११ ।।
teṣām evānukampārtham aham ajñānajaṁ tamaḥ
nāśayāmy ātmabhāvastho jñānadīpena bhāsvatā

In turn, out of compassion I come to dwell in their minds and destroy the darkness caused by ignorance with the shining light of knowledge. (10.11)

Comments: In addition to rewarding His ardent devotees with knowledge to achieve liberation, the Lord states that He frees their minds and shatters any ill-feelings and misery. After all, for one to develop a deep conviction in divine knowledge, one's mind must be freed from misery, prejudice and other negative emotions.

अर्जुन उवाच ।
परं ब्रह्म परं धाम पवित्रं परमं भवान् ।
पुरुषं शाश्वतं दिव्यम् आदिदेवमजं विभुम् ।। १२ ।।
arjuna uvāca
paraṁ brahma paraṁ dhāma pavitraṁ paramaṁ bhavān
puruṣaṁ śāśvataṁ divyam ādidevam ajaṁ vibhum

आहुस्त्वामृषयः सर्वे देवर्षिर्नारदस्तथा ।
असितो देवलो व्यासः स्वयं चैव ब्रवीषि मे ॥ १३॥
āhus tvām ṛṣayaḥ sarve devarṣir nāradas tathā
asito devalo vyāsaḥ svayaṁ caiva bravīṣi me

सर्वमेतदृतं मन्ये यन्मां वदसि केशव ।
न हि ते भगवन् व्यक्तिं विदुर्देवा न दानवाः ॥ १४ ॥
sarvam etad ṛtaṁ manye yan māṁ vadasi keśava
na hi te bhagavan vyaktiṁ vidur devā na dānavāḥ

स्वयमेवात्मनाऽऽत्मानं वेत्थ त्वं पुरुषोत्तम ।
भूतभावनभूतेश देवदेव जगत्पते ॥ १५ ॥
svayam evātmanātmānaṁ vettha tvaṁ puruṣottama
bhūtabhāvana bhūteśa devadeva jagatpate

वक्तुमर्हस्यशेषेण दिव्या ह्यात्मविभूतयः ।
याभिर्विभूतिभिर्लोकान् इमांस्त्वं व्याप्य तिष्ठसि ॥ १६ ॥
vaktum arhasy aśeṣeṇa divyā hy ātmavibhūtayaḥ
yābhir vibhūtibhir lokān imāṁs tvaṁ vyāpya tiṣṭhasi

कथं विद्यामहं योगिंस्त्वां सदा परिचिन्तयन् ।
केषु केषु च भावेषु चिन्त्योऽसि भगवन् मया ॥ १७ ॥
kathaṁ vidyām ahaṁ yogiṁs tvāṁ sadā paricintayan
keṣu keṣu ca bhāveṣu cintyosi bhagavan mayā

विस्तरेणाऽत्मनो योगं विभूतिं च जनार्दन ।
भूयः कथय तृप्तिर्हि शृण्वतो नास्ति मेऽमृतम् ॥ १८ ॥
vistareṇātmano yogaṁ vibhūtiṁ ca janārdana
bhūyaḥ kathaya tṛptir hi śṛṇvato nāsti memṛtam

Arjuna said:

O Krishna! Great sages, deities and heavenly singers praise you as the supreme entity, the ultimate abode for everyone, supremely sacred, full of auspicious attributes, eternal, and omnipresent. You have also taught me the same. (10.12) (10.13)

O Keshava! I trust everything you have said to me. O Lord! Neither great deities nor demons nor indeed any others knows you fully. O Purushottama! Controller of the universe, and Lord of everyone and everything. Only you know yourself fully. (10.14) (10.15)

Please educate me about your divine majestic forms with which you pervade this universe. O Lord of Infinite Abilities! How should I be thinking about you? O Supreme Lord! How do I visualize you and your presence in different entities in this universe? O Janardana! Tell me more details about your supreme abilities and majestic forms. I will never be satisfied with any amount of your sweet nectarine words. (10.16) (10.17) (10.18)

Comments: After hearing about the Lord's greatness and attributes in brief, Arjuna is now curious and interested in learning more. He states that great sages and deities have praised the Lord's attributes and the Lord Himself has reiterated them. Further, Arjuna knows that even great deities are not capable of fully knowing the Lord who is the creator of even Brahma and Rudra (indicated by the use of the Lord's name Keshava in 10.14, where *ka* refers to Brahma and *Isha* refers to Rudra, and Keshava is in fact the one who created both Brahma and Rudra). Only

the Lord knows His forms fully. Arjuna further states that for one to meditate on the Lord, it is important for one to visualize His forms. Hence, Arjuna would like to learn about the Lord's majestic forms. In 10.16, Arjuna requests the Lord to teach him fully about His forms. Arjuna is never satisfied with any amount of the sweet nectarine words of the Lord.

In 10.16, Arjuna uses the term *vibhuti* while referring to the Lord's form. Sri Rayaru in [GV] explains that *vibhuti* has two different meanings. Firstly, *vibhuti* = *vividhatayaa bhootayaha* meaning different forms of the Lord such as Rama, Krishna etc., and secondly *vibhuti* = *vishishtaha bhootayaha*, meaning the form of the Lord that bestows superiority to a specific entity or quality among its peers. These will be detailed in later verses.

The Lord's Divine Manifestations – Direct and Hidden

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

हन्त ते कथयिष्यामि दिव्या ह्यात्मविभूतयः ।

प्राधान्यतः कुरुश्रेष्ठ नास्त्यन्तो विस्तरस्य मे ॥ १९ ॥

śrībhagavān uvāca
hanta te kathayiṣyāmi divyā hy ātmavibhūtayaḥ
prādhānyataḥ kuruśreṣtha nāsty anto vistarasya me

अहमात्मा गुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयस्थितः ।

अहमादिश्च मध्यं च भूतानामन्त एव च ॥ २० ॥

aham ātmā guḍākeśa sarvabhūtāśayasthitaḥ
aham ādiś ca madhyaṁ ca bhūtānām anta eva ca

The Lord said:

O Arjuna, Superior among Kurus! I will tell you about some of My main majestic forms. There is no end to My forms. (10.19)

O Gudakesha (Arjuna, one who has conquered sleep)! I am omnipresent and I exist in the hearts of all living beings and I power their existence. I am responsible for the creation, sustenance, and dissolution of all beings. (10.20)

Comments: The Lord is pleased with Arjuna's sincerity and curiosity and resolves to teach him about His majestic forms. The Lord confirms that He has infinite forms. This seems to be in response to Arjuna's request in 10.16, where he wanted to learn about the Lord's forms fully (without leaving anything out). After all, not even great deities know fully about the Lord's forms or attributes. In 10.20, the Lord states that while He has special presence in many entities, He is present in everyone's hearts and He is the cause for the creation, the sustenance, and the dissolution of the universe.

In the next 18 verses from 10.21 to 10.38, the Lord explains in detail His specific, majestic forms. This group of verses is one of the most important parts of the **Gita**.

Sri Rayaru in [GV] explains that *vibhuti roopa* (divine manifestations) are of two types – direct forms and hidden forms. The Lord describes both types of manifestations. Direct form refers to His forms of Rama, Krishna, Vyasa, Kapila etc., while hidden forms refers to the Lord's form resident in specific objects that gives them supremacy. The hidden forms are of three types: (i) supreme among

similar objects, (ii) supreme among dissimilar objects which share a common condition, and (iii) supreme among objects except for an obvious leader. These categories are identified in Sri Madhwacharya's [GTN] referring to an ancient work, the **Vibhuti Tattva**. These categories will be identified in later verses. Also, Sri Rayaru uses *shabda nishpatti* (word derivation) to indicate the specific attribute of the Lord signified by the name of the chosen superior entity in each class.

आदित्यानामहं विष्णुर्ज्योतिषां रविरंशुमान् ।
मरीचिर्मरुतामस्मि नक्षत्राणामहं शशी ॥ २१ ॥

ādityānām ahaṁ viṣṇur jyotiṣāṁ ravir aṁśumān
marīcir marutām asmi nakṣatrāṇām ahaṁ śaśī

Among the twelve Adityas, I am Vishnu. Among all radiant objects, I am Ravi (Sun). I am Marichi among the Marut deities. I am The Moon among the constellations of the stars in the night sky (Resident in the Sun, Marichi, and the Moon, I grant them superiority among their peers). (10.21)

Comments: Among the twelve children of Aditi, the Lord is Vishnu (*Vishnu* = *vyaptatvaat sarveshu pratishtatvaat* = the one who pervades the universe and is resident in all). Among all luminous objects, He is Ravi (*rashmi yukto* = one who is full of infinite glow). Among the 49 Marut deities He is Marichi (*marinam charayati* = the one who moves clouds). Among stars, He is Shashi/ Moon (*shashaha asya aasteeti* = one who is full of happiness).

In this verse, one can see examples of the different categories of the Lord's manifestations. Vishnu is one of

His direct manifestations. The other three entities identified – Ravi, Marichi, Shashi are indirect manifestations. Also, Ravi (Sun) is chosen as supreme among similar radiant entities, while Shashi (the Moon) is indicated as supreme among the stars. The Moon is not a star. However, the Moon is the brightest object in the night sky. This is an example of a superior object among dissimilar objects (Moon and Stars) that share a common condition (the night sky). The Lord's special presence in the chosen superior object is signified by the Lord's attribute as explained by Sri Rayaru in [GV] through word derivation. For example, Ravi is the worldly name one uses for the Sun, but primarily Ravi means the one who is full of infinite glow, a reference to the Lord Almighty. This discussion applies to all other superior forms as well.

वेदानां सामवेदोऽस्मि देवानामस्मि वासवः ।
इन्द्रियाणां मनश्चास्मि भूतानामस्मि चेतना ।। २२।।
vedānāṁ sāmavedosmi devānām asmi vāsavaḥ
indriyāṇāṁ manaś cāsmi bhūtānām asmi cetanā

Among the **Vedas**, I am Sama Veda. Among deities, I am Vasava (Indra). Among the sense organs, I am the mind. Among the faculties of living beings, I am memory. (10.22)

Comments: The Lord is known as Sama (one who treats everyone equally), Vasava (exists everywhere), Manas (embodies knowledge) and Chetana (has infinite memory).

रुद्राणां शंकरश्चास्मि वित्तेशो यक्षरक्षसाम् ।
वसूनां पावकश्चास्मि मेरुः शिखरिणामहम् ।। २३ ।।

rudrāṇāṁ śaṁkaraś cāsmi vitteśo yakṣarakṣasām
vasūnāṁ pāvakaś cāsmi meruḥ śikhariṇām aham

Among the eleven Rudra deities, I am Shankara. I am Vittesha (Kubera) among the Yaksha deities. I am Pavaka among Vasus, and Meru among mountain peaks. (10.23)

Comments: The Lord's forms are derived as follows. Shankara (one who is the cause of happiness), Vittesha (owner of all wealth), Pavaka (purifier of everything) and Meru (one who is not activated by some other entity). As indicated before, Shankara is the name for the supreme among the Rudra deities and he derives his superiority and name from the Lord whose attribute is identified by the derivation of the word Shankara.

पुरोधसां च मुख्यं मां विद्धि पार्थ बृहस्पतिम् ।
सेनानीनामहं स्कन्दः सरसामस्मि सागरः ।। २४ ।।
purodhasāṁ ca mukhyaṁ māṁ viddhi pārtha bṛhaspatim
senānīnām ahaṁ skandaḥ sarasām asmi sāgaraḥ

O Partha! Among priests, I am Brihaspati. I am Skanda among warrior commanders. I am the ocean among water bodies. (10.24)

Comments: Among the priests, the Lord has special presence in Brihaspati and resides in him in the same name which stands for the one who is the Lord of all deities. He is known as Skanda (the one who ejects the universe out of Himself during creation) and Sagara (as He is the consumer of the essence in all substances and activities).

महर्षीणां भृगुरहं गिरामस्म्येकमक्षरम् ।
यज्ञानां जपयज्ञोऽस्मि स्थावराणां हिमालयः ॥ २५ ॥
maharṣīṇāṁ bhṛgur ahaṁ girām asmy ekam akṣaram
yajñānāṁ japayajñosmi sthāvarāṇāṁ himālayaḥ

I am Bhrighu among the sages. I am the letter (*akshara*) Om among all letters. I give special powers to chanting hymns (Japa) among all rituals and sacrifices. I am Himalaya among all immovables. (10.25)

Comments: He is known as Bhrighu (the one who eviscerates enemies). He is called Akshara (the one not subject to four-fold decay as described in (2.18)). He is Japa (the one who protects anyone born) and Himalaya (the one who is the shelter for the two forms of Lakshmi – *hree* and *shree*). In (10.23) Meru was recognized as the supreme among mountain peaks but in this verse, Himalaya is identified as supreme among all immovables.

अश्वत्थः सर्ववृक्षाणां देवर्षीणां च नारदः ।
गन्धर्वाणां चित्ररथः सिद्धानां कपिलो मुनिः ॥ २६ ॥
aśvatthaḥ sarvavṛkṣāṇāṁ devarṣīṇāṁ ca nāradaḥ
gandharvāṇāṁ citrarathaḥ siddhānāṁ kapilo muniḥ

I am Ashwattha (Banyan), among all trees. I am Narada among all divine sages. I am Chitraratha among Gandharvas, the heavenly musicians. I am the sage Kapila among all Siddha sages. (10.26)

Comments: The Lord is known as Ashwattha (the one with a horse like face in the form of Hayagreeva, as *Ashwa* means horse). He is Narada (the one who fulfills the wishes of humans as *nara* means human). He is known as Chitraratha (the one with the spectacular chariot as *ratha*

means chariot). Among sages He is Kapila who is a direct form of the Lord Almighty where *kapila* means one who is the embodiment of happiness, one who protects the universe and dissolves it within Himself during the great dissolution (*ka* means happiness, *pi* which leads to *palana* means one who protects and *la* which leads to *laya* means one who absorbs the universe during dissolution).

HH Sri Vidyasagara Madhava Teertha offers another unique derivation for the word Kapila as *kapi* + *la* where, *kapi* indicates monkey like unsteadiness and *la* stands for *layati* (destruction). Thus, Kapila can also be interpreted as the attribute of the Lord Almighty who destroys the monkey like unsteadiness in His devotees minds.

उच्चैःश्रवसमश्वानां विद्धि माममृतोद्भवम् ।
ऐरावतं गजेन्द्राणां नराणां च नराधिपम् ॥ २७ ॥
uccaiḥśravasam aśvānāṁ viddhi mām amṛtodbhavam
airāvataṁ gajendrāṇāṁ narāṇāṁ ca narādhipam

Among horses, I am Ucchaishravas, born from the ocean of nectar during the churning. I am Airavata among the elephants. I am King among humans. (10.27)

Comments: The Lord is known as Ucchaishravas (the one who has the highest fame) and Airavata (the one who protects *ira,* Goddess Lakshmi). He is also known as Naradhipa (the one who rules over everyone on earth).

आयुधानामहं वज्रं धेनूनामस्मि कामधुक् ।
प्रजनश्चास्मि कन्दर्पः सर्पाणामस्मि वासुकिः ॥ २८ ॥
āyudhānām ahaṁ vajraṁ dhenūnām asmi kāmadhuk
prajanaś cāsmi kandarpaḥ sarpāṇām asmi vāsukiḥ

I am the thunderbolt (diamond) among all weapons. I am Kamadhuk (wish fulfilling cow) among cows. I am Manmatha/Kandarpa (Cupid) responsible for progeny. I am Vasuki among all single hooded serpents. (10.28)

Comments: The Lord is called Vajra (the one who is without blemish), Kamadhuk (the one who grants His devotees wishes), Kandarpa (one who enjoys different types of happiness) and Vasuki (one who grants the comfort of shelter to devotees).

अनन्तश्चास्मि नागानां वरुणो यादसामहम् ।
पितृणामर्यमा चास्मि यमः संयमतामहम् ।। २९ ।।

anantaś cāsmi nāgānāṁ varuṇo yādasām aham
pitṛṇām aryamā cāsmi yamaḥ saṁyamatām aham

Among multi hooded Naga serpents, I am Ananta. I am Varuna among all aquatics. I am Aryama among the ancestor deities. I am Yama among the deities authorized to regulate the worlds. (10.29)

Comments: The Lord is known by the name Ananta which means unending (the one who spans unending or infinite space, time, and attributes). He is Varuna (the one who grants the ultimate abode of bliss -*moksha*) and Aryama (omniscient). He is Yama (the one who grants the power of regulation).

It must be noted that the deity Varuna in whom the Lord resides by the same name is not an aquatic entity, but he is the governing deity for water.

प्रह्लादश्चास्मि दैत्यानां कालः कलयतामहम् ।
मृगाणां च मृगेन्द्रोऽहं वैनतेयश्च पक्षिणाम् ।। ३० ।।

prahlādaś cāsmi daityānāṁ kālaḥ kalayatām aham
mṛgāṇāṁ ca mṛgendroham vainateyaś ca pakṣiṇām

I am Prahlada among the daityas. I am Kala among the entities that bind. I am Mrugendra (lion) among the animals. I am Vainateya (Garuda) among the birds. (10.30)

Comments: He resides in Prahlada by the same name (the one with supreme happiness). He is Kala (the one who knows everything), Mrugendra or lion (the one who is the Lord of devotees who are searching for Him), and Vainateya (the one who shelters devotees who offer special salutations to Him).

पवनः पवतामस्मि रामः शस्त्रभृतामहम् ।
झषाणां मकरश्चास्मि स्रोतसामस्मि जाह्नवी ॥ ३१ ॥
pavanaḥ pavatām asmi rāmaḥ śastrabhṛtām aham
jhaṣāṇāṁ makaraś cāsmi strotasām asmi jāhnavī

Among the entities that purify, I am Pavana. I am Rama among the warriors who carry weapons. Among the fish, I am Makara (crocodile). I am Jahnavi (Ganges) among the rivers. (10.31)

Comments: The Lord is called Pavana (the one who is worshipped by emperors). His direct form Rama (the one who creates happiness in this world) is supreme among warriors who carry weapons. He is known as Makara (the one who reveals very little about Himself; *maakara* = *maa* + *karoti* indicates someone who reveals Himself, but here instead of *maa* the letter is shortened to *ma* hence Makara stands for someone who reveals very little about Himself). He is Jahnavi (the one who protects those detached from worldly life).

सर्गाणामादिरन्तश्च मध्यं चैवाहमर्जुन ।

अध्यात्मविद्या विद्यानां वादः प्रवदतामहम् ।। ३२ ।।

sargāṇām ādir antaś ca madhyaṁ caivāham arjuna
adhyātmavidyā vidyānāṁ vādaḥ pravadatām aham

Arjuna! I am responsible for the birth, life, and death of all beings. Among types of knowledge, I am Adhyatma, spiritual knowledge. I am Vada (debate) among discussions. (10.32)

Comments: The Lord is known as Adhyatma (Lord of all living beings). There are three types of philosophical discussions, *vada* (debate among scholars to establish the truth about a particular issue), *jalpa* (debate with the specific purpose of winning over and converting the opposing party), and *vithanda* (debate to refute an opponent's point of view). The Lord resides in *vada* giving it a superior status among the types of discussions and goes by the name Vada (the one who is known by all sounds).

अक्षराणामकारोऽस्मि द्वन्द्वः सामासिकस्य च ।

अहमेवाक्षयः कालो धाताऽहं विश्वतोमुखः ।। ३३ ।।

akṣarāṇām akārosmi dvandvaḥ sāmāsikasya ca
aham evākṣayaḥ kālo dhātāhaṁ viśvatomukhaḥ

I am the letter A (*akara*) among all letters. I am Dvandva among all compound words (in Sanskrit grammar). I am Kala (time) which has no end. I support and sustain everything and hence go by the name of Dhata. I am omnipresent. (10.33)

Comments: The Lord is also known by the letter 'A' as it denotes the Vishwa form of the Lord that resides in

everyone's eyes (as stated in **Katha Upanishat**, the primordial syllable *Om* is derived as *a* + *u* + *ma*, where the three letters denote three different forms of the Lord, namely, Vishwa, Taijasa, and Prajna). The Lord is known as Dvandva (the one who resides both inside and outside of all entities), Kala (the one who eviscerates worldly miseries). The Lord resides in four-faced Brahma also known as *vishwato mukha* (one with many faces) with the same name as He spans the entire universe. He is also known as Dhata (one who supports and sustains everything in the universe).

मृत्युः सर्वहरश्चाहम् उद्भवश्च भविष्यताम् ।
कीर्तिः श्रीर्वाक् च नारीणां स्मृतिर्मेधा धृतिः क्षमा ।। ३४ ।।
mṛtyuḥ sarvaharaś cāham udbhavaś ca bhaviṣyatām
kīrtiḥ śrīr vāk ca nārīṇāṁ smṛtir medhā dhṛtiḥ kṣamā

I am Mrutyu and cause death to everyone. I am the giver of birth to everyone. I represent and regulate the feminine qualities of fame, wealth, speech, memory, intellect, firmness, and tolerance. (10.34)

Comments: The Lord is known as Mrutyu (the one who destroys everything), Udhbava (the one who is the cause of everyone's birth), Keerthi (one who is to be praised), Shree (the one who shelters everyone), Vak (the one who stimulates everyone's speech), Smriti (the one who has to be remembered by devotees), Medha (the one who regulates intellect), Dhruti (the one who regulates one's firmness), and Kshama (the one who regulates one's quality of tolerance).

This verse is an example where the Lord is indicating His presence in attributes and qualities as opposed to entities, such as deities, places, mountains, rivers etc.

बृहत्साम तथा साम्नां गायत्री छन्दसामहम् ।
मासानां मार्गशीर्षोऽहं ऋतूनां कुसुमाकरः ॥ ३५ ॥
bṛhatsāma tathā sāmnāṁ gāyatrī chandasām aham
māsānāṁ mārgaśīrṣoham ṛtūnāṁ kusumākaraḥ

I am the Brihat hymn among all the hymns of the Sama Veda. I am Gayatri among the poetic meters. I am Margasheersha (harvest month) among the twelve months. I am Kusumakara/Vasantha (spring) among the seasons. (10.35)

Comments: He is Brihatsama (*brihats* = the one who is superior to deity four faced Brahma and *ama* = the one who cannot be fully known), Gayatri = *gayat* + *trati* (the one who protects those who sing His praises), Margasheersha = *margaanam* + *sheersha* (the one who is at the pinnacle of the paths such as the path of Archi that one takes after leaving one's body), and Kusumakara = *kumaam* + *sumaam* (the one who causes ignorance in evil and wisdom the in pious).

Note that in the **Sama Veda**, where the verses from the Rig Veda are set to musical score, there are different types of singing such as *rarthantara, vairoopa, brihat* etc. Among them, the Lord resides in the *brihat* type of *sama* singing with the same name, Brihatsama.

द्यूतं छलयतामस्मि तेजस्तेजस्विनामहम् ।
जयोऽस्मि व्यवसायोऽस्मि सत्त्वं सत्त्ववतामहम्॥ ३६ ॥

dyutaṁ chalayatām asmi tejas tejasvinām aham
jayosmi vyavasāyosmi sattvaṁ sattvavatām aham

I am gambling among deceitful vices. I am splendour among the splendid. I am victory in the victorious. I am conviction in the steadfast. I am purity among the pious. (10.36)

Comments: The Lord is known as Dyoota (the one who indulges in sports such as gambling), Tejas (the one who glows). He is responsible for the qualities of Jaya (the one who is ever victorious), Vyavasaya (the one who is resident in the quality of enterprise), and Sattvam (the one who gives purity to the pious).

It must be noted that the Lord is not responsible for one indulging in gambling which is recognized as one of the vices that is to be avoided. It is just that even among the sinners, the Lord enables their activity which is as per their innate nature.

वृष्णीनां वासुदेवोऽस्मि पाण्डवानां धनंजयः ।
मुनीनामप्यहं व्यासः कवीनामुशना कविः ।। ३७ ।।
vṛṣṇīnāṁ vāsudevosmi pāṇḍavānāṁ dhanaṁjayaḥ
munīnām apy ahaṁ vyāsaḥ kavīnām uśanā kaviḥ

Among the descendants of Vrushni, I am Vasudeva. Among Pandavas, I am Dhananjaya (Arjuna). I am Vyasa among the sages. I am Shukracharya among the seers. (10.37)

Comments: The Lord is called Vasudeva (the one who provides shelter to everyone and who spans everywhere). He is Dhananjaya (*dhanam* + *jayati* = the one who has won treasure). He is Vyasa (*vi* + *asa* = the one who has

a special existence). This is a direct form of the Lord. He is also known as Ushana Kavi (the one who has an interest in the act of creation). This is also the name of Shukracharya, a great scholar.

दण्डो दमयतामस्मि नीतिरस्मि जिगीषताम् ।
मौनं चैवास्मि गुह्यानां ज्ञानं ज्ञानवतामहम् ।। ३८ ।।
daṇḍo damayatām asmi nītir asmi jigīṣatām
maunaṁ caivāsmi guhyānāṁ jñānaṁ jñānavatām aham

I am Danda (the punishing rod) in chastisers. I am the strategy in those aspiring for victory. I am silence in secrets. I am wisdom in the wise. (10.38)

Comments: The Lord is Danda (as He regulates the act of punishing). He is strategy/Neeti (the one who promotes moral values). He is known as silence/Mouna (the one who is worshipped by Manu deities). He is known as Jnana (the one who regulates knowledge).

Thus in 18 verses from (10.21) to (10.38), the Lord describes His presence in various entities and objects giving them superiority among their peers. Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies that the Lord has identified some entities as having His special presence though they were not the obvious leaders in those categories. These are-

* Samaveda in (10.22), where Rig Veda is known as the superior among the **Vedas**.
* Vasava (deity Indra) in (10.22), where Lakshmi, Brahma etc., are known to be superior to Indra.
* *japa* (meditation) among ways of worship in (10.25), where *jnana* (worship through knowledge) is known to be superior among ways of worship.

* *vajra* (diamond) among weapons in (10.28), where *chakra* (disc) is known to be superior among weapons.

* *ushana* (Shukracharya) among scholars in (10.37), where deity Brahma is known to be superior among scholars.

* Dhananjaya (Arjuna) among the Pandavas in (10.37), where Bheema is known to be superior among the Pandavas.

As per Sri Madhwacharya's [GTN], the above entities are identified as having the special presence of the Lord as cases to illustrate their superiority among other subcategories within a main category. This was explained in the comment section of verses (10.19) and (10.20), where it was stated that the supremacy of the Lord among His hidden forms is of three types: (i) supreme among similar objects, (ii) supreme among dissimilar objects who share a common condition, and (iii) supreme among objects except for an obvious leader. For example, among deities, after the Lord, the order of gradation is Sri Lakshmi, Brahma, Vayu, Saraswathi, Bharati, Sesha, Garuda, Rudra, Varuni, Sowparni, Parvati and then Indra. However, Indra is superior among the deities in Swarga Loka (heaven).

यच्चापि सर्वभूतानां बीजं तदहमर्जुन ।
न तदस्ति विना यत्स्यात् मया भूतं चराचरम् ।। ३९।।
yac cāpi sarvabhūtānāṁ bījaṁ tad aham arjuna
na tad asti vinā yat syān mayā bhūtaṁ carācaram

I am the primordial seed responsible for the attributes and qualities in all beings. There are no moveable (sentient) or stationary (inert) objects without My presence in them. (10.39)

Comments: The Lord clarifies that He is resident in every object in the universe, sentient or inert. While He has special presence in some objects giving them superiority in their respective categories, such as the Sun (Ravi) among glowing objects, one should not assume that the Lord is not resident in other glowing objects.

Uncountable Divine Manifestations

नान्तोऽस्ति मम दिव्यानां विभूतीनां परंतप ।
एष तूद्देशतः प्रोक्तो विभूतेर्विस्तरो मया ।। ४० ।।

nāntosti mama divyānāṁ vibhūtīnāṁ paraṁtapa
eṣa tūddeśataḥ prokto vibhūter vistaro mayā

O Parantapa! There is no end to My infinite divine majestic forms. I have only indicated a sample of My infinite expansive forms. (10.40)

Comments: In verse (10.16), Arjuna had requested the Lord to teach him about His majestic forms and manifestations, and after describing His divine manifestations in verses (10.21) to (10.38), the Lord declares here that His forms are infinite, implying that no one can completely comprehend Him.

यद्यद् विभूतिमत् सत्त्वं श्रीमदूर्जितमेव वा ।
तत्तदेवावगच्छ त्वं मम तेजोंऽशसम्भवम् ।। ४१ ।।

yad yad vibhūtimat sattvaṁ śrīmad ūrjitam eva vā
tat tad evāvagaccha tvaṁ mama tejoṁśasaṁbhavam

Whoever or whatever is supreme in their respective categories and exhibit strength and richness, their premiership arises from an infinitesimal fraction of My glory. (10.41)

Comments: The Lord further clarifies that the supremacy in any attribute or quality visible in any entity is due only to an infinitesimal fraction of the Lord's special presence in them. Hence, the Sun (Ravi) who is supreme among all glowing objects exhibits such supremacy due to the presence of a minute fraction of the Lord's glory. This is different from the Lord's direct forms identified in these verses such as Vishnu, Rama, Kapila, Vyasa, and Krishna.

अथवा बहुनैतेन किं ज्ञातेन तवार्जुन ।
विष्टभ्याहमिदं कृत्स्नं एकांशेन स्थितो जगत् ।। ४२।।
athavā bahunaitena kiṁ jñātena tavārjuna
viṣṭabhyāham idaṁ kṛtsnam ekāṁśena sthito jagat

O Arjuna! What use is it for you to know about My majestic forms? I pervade and support the entire universe with a minute fraction of My glory. (10.42)

Comments: The intent of the Lord's question is to caution Arjuna (and everyone else) that one should not conclude that His forms are limited to those identified in this chapter as they represent a miniscule fraction of His infinite forms. The intent is not to say that knowledge of the divine manifestations in this chapter is not of use, but to realize that it is a small fraction of His infinite manifestations. There will be more description about the Lord's pervasiveness in future chapters. This chapter is a

prelude to the glorious Universal Form of the Lord which will be covered in the next chapter.

Summary of Chapter 10

In this chapter, the Lord details His forms and presence in many entities and attributes in response to Arjuna's questions which appeared in verses (10.12) to (10.18). Arjuna was keen to learn about the Lord's divine glories and countless manifestations as one needs to form a mental image of the Lord to visualize Him during concentrated meditation. The Lord identifies His divine manifestations and special presence in entities which gives them superiority. These are described in 18 verses from (10.21) to (10.38). Sri Rayaru in [GV] explains that *vibhuti roopa* (divine manifestation) is of two types – direct forms and hidden forms. Direct form refers to His forms of Vishnu, Rama, Krishna, Vyasa, Kapila etc., while hidden forms refer to the Lord's presence in specific entities that gives them supremacy. The superiority among the hidden forms is of three types: (i) supreme among similar objects, (ii) supreme among dissimilar objects which share a common condition, and (iii) supreme among objects except for an obvious leader. Also, Sri Rayaru uses *shabda nishpatti* (word derivation) to indicate the specific attribute of the Lord signified by the name of the chosen superior entity in each class. In verse (10.21), He identifies Ravi (sun) as the entity that is superior among similar objects, namely luminaries. In the same verse, the Lord also identifies Shashi (Moon) as superior among stars. The Moon is not a star. However, the Moon and the stars share the common attribute of being visible in the night sky. In that sense, the Moon is superior to

the stars. This is an example of an entity that is superior among dissimilar objects. In verse (10. 22), He identifies *sama veda* as superior among the **Vedas**. However, it is well known that *Rig veda* is the superior. So, the interpretation here is that the Lord is identifying *Sama veda* among the **Vedas** except for the obvious leader (namely *Rig Veda*). This is also seen in verse (10.25), where the Lord identified *japa* (meditation) as superior among the forms of worship where one knows that *jnana* (knowledge) is the supreme form. In addition to such entities (both sentient and inert such as mountains, rivers etc.), the Lord also signifies His presence in qualities and attributes such as fame, memory, intellect, tolerance etc., as seen in verse (10.34), and also in activities such as gambling (10.36). In verse (10.16), Arjuna had requested the Lord to teach him completely about His majestic forms and manifestations, and after describing His divine manifestations in verses (10.21) to (10.38), the Lord declares in verse (10.40), that His forms are infinite, implying that no one can completely comprehend Him. The Lord concludes His sermon on His majestic forms by cautioning Arjuna that he should not assume that the Lord's various forms are limited to those described in this chapter because they are indeed infinite and expansive. In that sense, this is a prelude to the description of the Lord's Universal Form as will be seen in the next chapter.

॥ इति दशमोऽध्यायः ॥

End of Chapter 10

एकादशोऽध्यायः – विश्वरूपदर्शनम्
Chapter 11 - The Lord's Universal Form

Chapter Introduction: This chapter of 55 verses is termed *Vishwa Roopa Darshanam* (The Lord's Universal Form). In the concluding verse of the previous chapter, the Lord declares that He has presence in everything in the universe and just a minute fraction of His presence causes superiority in many objects. The Lord also indicated that previous teachings provided only a glimpse of His powers. This chapter conveys more details about His forms. After listening to the Lord's teachings on His divine manifestations, His amazing activities in terms of creation of the universe etc., Arjuna is naturally curious to behold the Lord's omnipotent form. The Lord grants Arjuna's wish by giving him Divine Vision before exhibiting His grand, Universal Form which is the quintessential feature of this chapter. The description of the Lord's Universal Form mirrors the description in the **Purusha Sookta** (the Nature of Cosmic Being), from the **Rig Veda** which is considered the primordial group of hymns that gave rise to the entire span of Vedic literature. In that sense this chapter is like a commentary on the **Purusha Sookta**. This chapter also has a soulful prayer by Arjuna on seeing the Lord's Universal Form. While the Lord had previously taught Arjuna about His greatness and attributes, the act of physically seeing the Lord's Universal Form completely solidifies Arjuna's conviction in Sri Krishna's teachings.

Arjuna's Desire to View the Lord's Universal Form

अर्जुन उवाच ।
मदनुग्रहाय परमं गुह्यमध्यात्मसंज्ञितम् ।
यत्त्वयोक्तं वचस्तेन मोहोऽयं विगतो मम ।। १ ।।
arjuna uvāca
madanugrahāya paramaṁ guhyam adhyātmasaṁjñitam
yat tvayoktaṁ vacas tena mohoyaṁ vigato mama

भवाप्ययौ हि भूतानां श्रुतौ विस्तरशो मया ।
त्वत्तः कमलपत्राक्ष माहात्म्यमपि चाव्ययम् ।। २ ।।
bhavāpyayau hi bhūtānāṁ śrutau vistaraśo mayā
tvattaḥ kamalapatrākṣa māhātmyam api cāvyayam

एवमेतद्यथाऽऽत्थ त्वम् आत्मानं परमेश्वर ।
द्रष्टुमिच्छामि ते रूपम् ऐश्वरं पुरुषोत्तम ।। ३ ।।
evam etad yathāttha tvam ātmānaṁ parameśvara
draṣṭum icchāmi te rūpam aiśvaraṁ puruṣottama

मन्यसे यदि तच्छक्यं मया द्रष्टुमिति प्रभो ।
योगेश्वर ततो मे त्वं दर्शयाऽत्मानमव्ययम् ।। ४ ।।
manyase yadi tac chakyaṁ mayā draṣṭum iti prabho
yogeśvara tato me tvaṁ darśayātmānam avyayam

Arjuna said:

O Krishna! Out of compassion, You blessed me with the most secret divine knowledge. My ignorance is dispelled by Your words. (11.1)

O Krishna, One with Lotus Eyes! I understood about the cycle of births and deaths for living beings. I also learnt about Your infinite greatness. (11.2)

O Supreme Lord! It is true that You taught me a lot about Your attributes and forms. O! Supreme among All Beings! I crave to have a vision of Your great, unimaginable majestic form. (11.3)

O Lord of *Yogas*! If you feel that I am capable of seeing Your form physically, please show me Your Universal Form that has no end. (11.4)

Comments: Arjuna, after hearing about the Lord's divine manifestations and His amazing activities, is now craving to have a vision of the Lord's form. After all, no amount of studying or listening about the Lord can be compared to the experience of directly seeing the Lord. Also, a direct vision of the Lord is extremely helpful for one during meditation. Hence, Arjuna requests the Lord to grant him a vision of His magnificent form. Arjuna also knows that the Lord is beyond the perception of sense organs which he indicates by addressing the Lord as Prabhu in verse (11.4). However, Arjuna also addresses the Lord as Yogeshwara (one who is the master of all *yogas* - ways and means), implying that the Lord would guide him on the sure path to a direct vision of His Supreme form. He humbly requests the Lord in (11.4) that if He felt that he was eligible and capable of seeing His imperishable form, then the Lord should grant him that vision.

The Lord grants Arjuna's Wish

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
पश्य मे पार्थ रूपाणि शतशोऽथ सहस्रशः ।
नानाविधानि दिव्यानि नानावर्णाकृतीनि च ॥ ५ ॥

śrībhagavān uvāca
paśya me pārtha rūpāṇi śataśotha sahastraśaḥ
nānāvidhāni divyāni nānāvarṇākṛtīni ca

पश्यादित्यान् वसून् रुद्रान् अश्विनौ मरुतस्तथा ।
बहून्यदृष्टपूर्वाणि पश्याऽश्चर्याणि भारत ॥ ६ ॥
paśyādityān vasūn rudrān aśvinau marutas tathā
bahūnyadṛṣṭapūrvāṇi paśyāścaryāṇi bhārata

इहैकस्थं जगत्कृत्स्नं पश्याद्य सचराचरम् ।
मम देहे गुडाकेश यच्चान्यन् द्रष्टुमिच्छसि ॥ ७ ॥
ihaikastham jagat kṛtsnaṁ paśyādya sacarācaram
mama dehe guḍākeśa yac cānyad draṣṭum icchasi

न तु मां शक्यसे द्रष्टुमनेनैव स्वचक्षुषा ।
दिव्यं ददामि ते चक्षुः पश्य मे योगमैश्वरम् ॥ ८ ॥
na tu māṁ śakyase draṣṭum anenaiva svacakṣuṣā
divyaṁ dadāmi te cakṣuḥ paśya me yogam aiśvaram

The Lord said:

O Partha! My forms are infinite, transcendental, colourful and of varying shapes. See My hundreds of thousands (infinite) of forms. (11.5)

O Bharata! See all deities - Adityas, Vasus, Rudras, Ashwini twins, Maruts - in Me. Also see many amazing, astonishing things you have never seen before. (11.6)

O Gudakesha! In My Universal Form, you can see the entire universe with all animate and inanimate objects in one place. You can see everything you wish to see here. (11.7)

But you will not be able to see My Universal Form with your normal eyes. I will grant you Divine Vision with which you will be able to view My supreme splendor. (11.8)

Comments: The Lord having been humbly prayed to by Arjuna, resolves to grant Arjuna the vision of His magnificent Universal Form. The reference to *hundreds and thousands* in (11.5) indicates innumerable or infinite forms. The Lord displays all deities in His form as well as many astonishing, indescribable entities that Arjuna has never seen before. He also tells Arjuna to see in Him all entities in the universe and anything else that he can imagine. In (11.8), the Lord confirms that Arjuna would not be able to see His Universal Form with his normal eyes and that He would grant Arjuna a pair of divine eyes to behold His Universal Form.

Sanjaya Describes the Amazing Spectacle

संजय उवाच ।
एवमुक्त्वा ततो राजन् महायोगेश्वरो हरिः ।
दर्शयामास पार्थाय परमं रूपमैश्वरम् ॥ ९ ॥

sañjaya uvāca
evam uktvā tato rājan mahāyogeśvaro hariḥ
darśayāmāsa pārthāya paramaṁ rūpam aiśvaram

Sanjaya said:

O King Dhrutarashtra! Lord Sri Hari, the Lord of all activities, having said thus, displayed His magnificent Universal form with multitudes of great attributes to Arjuna. (11.9)

Comments: At this stage, Sanjaya informs King Dhrutarashtra that Lord Hari accedes to Arjuna's request and displays His magnificent Universal Form. (Hari, as the Lord is referred to here has at least two meanings – the one who consumes the offerings from devotees' sacrifices and one who is coloured green). Those who had gathered in the battle ground were able to view the Lord's Universal Form to the extent of their capabilities and eligibilities.

अनेकवक्त्रनयनम् अनेकाद्भुतदर्शनम् ।

अनेकदिव्याभरणं दिव्यानेकोद्यतायुधम् ।। १० ।।

anekavaktranayanam anekādbhutadarśanam
anekadivyābharaṇaṁ divyānekodyatāyudham

दिव्यमाल्याम्बरधरं दिव्यगन्धानुलेपनम् ।

सर्वाश्चर्यमयं देवम् अनन्तं विश्वतो मुखम् ।। ११ ।।

divyamālyāmbaradharaṁ divyagandhānulepanam
sarvāścaryamayaṁ devam anantaṁ viśvatomukham

दिवि सूर्यसहस्रस्य भवेद्युगपदुत्थिता ।

यदि भाः सदृशी सा स्याद् भासस्तस्य महात्मनः ।। १२ ।।

divi sūryasahastrasya bhaved yugapad utthitā
yadi bhāḥ sadṛśī sā syād bhāsas tasya mahātmanaḥ

The Lord's Universal Form has infinite faces, infinite eyes, infinite amazing aspects, multitudes of divine ornaments, multitudes of divine weapons. (11.10)

The Lord's Universal Form is sporting divine garlands, divine clothes, divine sandal wood paste, is full of infinite amazing, wondrous attributes (such as knowledge, bliss) with faces on all sides. (11.11)

That exalted Universal Form has the brightness of thousands and thousands (countless) of Suns rising altogether at the same time. (11.12)

Comments: Sanjaya describes the Lord's form as seen by him. It must be remembered that he is relaying the proceedings in the war to King Dhrutarashtra, as Lord Vedavyasa had granted Sanjaya the ability to visualize the war from a distance. Lord Vedavyasa is another form of Lord Krishna, as per (10.37). So it is not a surprise that Sanjaya was also able to visualize the Lord's Universal Form which otherwise was not visible to normal human eyes. The description in (11.10) about the Lord's attributes is consistent with the one in the **Purusha Sookta**.

The fact that Arjuna was able to view the Lord's Universal Form with the entire universe in it with the inset background of the battlefield, also proves that the universe is indeed a real entity and not an illusion. Of course, Arjuna required the Divine Vision granted to him by the Lord to view the universe pervaded by Him.

तत्रैकस्थं जगत्कृत्स्नं प्रविभक्तमनेकधा ।
अपश्यद्देवदेवस्य शरीरे पाण्डवस्तदा ।। १३ ।।
tatraikasthaṁ jagat kṛtsnaṁ pravibhaktam anekadhā
apaśyad devadevasya śarīre pāṇḍavas tadā

ततः स विस्मयाविष्टो हृष्टरोमा धनंजयः ।
प्रणम्य शिरसा देवं कृतांजलिरभाषत ।। १४ ।।
tataḥ sa vismayāviṣṭo hṛṣṭaromā dhanaṁjayaḥ
praṇamya śirasā devaṁ kṛtāñjalir abhāṣata

Arjuna, at that time, saw the entire universe with its manifold divisions, whirling inside the Universal Form of Lord Krishna, the Lord of all deities. (11.13)

Arjuna, trembling with tears in his eyes and immersed in indescribable feelings, prostrated before the Lord, bowing his head and started praying. (11.14)

Comments: Arjuna, after viewing the Lord's Universal Form in all its glory, is overcome with emotion. He describes the Lord's Universal Form in the following 17 verses with tears of joy in his eyes.

Arjuna's Tearful Prayer

अर्जुन उवाच ।
पश्यामि देवांस्तव देव देहे
सर्वांस्तथा भूतविशेषसंघान् ।
ब्रह्माणमीशं कमलासनस्थं
ऋषींश्च सर्वान् उरगांश्च दिव्यान् ॥ १५ ॥

arjuna uvāca
paśyāmi devāṁs tava deva dehe sarvāṁs tathā bhūta-viśeṣasaṁghān
brahmāṇam īśaṁ kamalāsanasthaṁ ṛṣīṁś ca sarvān uragāṁś ca divyān

Arjuna said:

O Lord! In Your divine form I can see all deities, and different types of creatures. I can also see the four faced deity Lord Brahma, and Lord Rudra sitting on his lap. I can see all the great sages and divine serpents. (11.15)

Comments: The four faced deity Brahma shelters in the Lord Almighty, Rudra similarly shelters in Brahma (symbolically indicated by him sitting on Brahma's lap). As per the epic **Padma Purana**, all other deities are sheltered in various organs of Lord Rudra.

अनेकबाहूदरवक्त्रनेत्रं
पश्यामि त्वां सर्वतोऽनन्तरूपम् ।
नान्तं न मध्यं न पुनस्तवाऽदिं
पश्यामि विश्वेश्वर विश्वरूप ॥ १६ ॥

anekabāhūdaravaktranetraṁ paśyāmi tvāṁ sarvatonantarūpam
nāntaṁ na madhyaṁ na punas tavādiṁ paśyāmi viśveśvara viśvarūpa

किरीटिनं गदिनं चक्रिणं च
तेजोराशिं सर्वतो दीप्तिमन्तम् ।
पश्यामि त्वां दुर्निरीक्ष्यं समन्ता-
द्दीप्तानलार्कद्युतिमप्रमेयम् ॥ १७ ॥

kirīṭinaṁ gadinaṁ cakriṇaṁ ca tejorāśiṁ sarvato dīptimantam
paśyāmi tvāṁ durnirīkṣyaṁ samantād dīptānalārkadyutim aprameyam

I see Your infinite forms with infinite shoulders, infinite stomachs, infinite faces, infinite eyes everywhere. O Lord of the Universe! I cannot see the beginning, end, or middle of Your forms. (11.16)

I see Your unending divine forms wearing crowns, holding maces and discs, with resplendent glow of light

like blazing Suns. Your incredible forms are everywhere, and they seem to pierce my eyes. (11.17)

Comments: In verse (11.16), the use of the word *sarvataha* (everywhere) indicates the Lord spanning all spaces. Space is infinite and so is the Lord. The reference to the Lord's infinite organs mirrors the description in the **Purusha Sookta**.

त्वमक्षरं परमं वेदितव्यं
त्वमस्य विश्वस्य परं निधानम् ।
त्वमव्ययः शाश्वतधर्मगोप्ता
सनातनस्त्वं पुरुषो मतो मे ॥ १८ ॥

tvam akṣaraṁ paramaṁ veditavyaṁ tvam asya viśvasya paraṁ nidhānam
tvam avyayaḥ śāśvatadharmagoptā sanātanas tvaṁ puruṣo mato me

You have no end. You are the Supreme One. You are the one to be known. You are the primary shelter to this world. Your strength never diminishes. You are the protector of timeless righteous values. You have no beginning, You are eternal, and You are described in scriptures such as the **Puranas**. (11.18)

Comments: This verse indicates the eternal existence of the Lord as the one who has no beginning, middle or end. While verse (11.16) referred to the Lord spanning infinite space, this verse indicates the Lord spanning infinite time.

अनादिमध्यान्तमनन्तवीर्यम्
अनन्तबाहुं शशिसूर्यनेत्रम् ।
पश्यामि त्वां दीप्तहुताशवक्त्रं
स्वतेजसा विश्वमिदं तपन्तम् ।। १९ ।।

anādimadhyāntam anantavīryam anantabāhuṁ śaśisūrya-netram
paśyāmi tvāṁ dīptahutāśavaktraṁ svatejasā viśvam idaṁ tapantam

You have infinite powers with no beginning, middle or end. You have infinite shoulders and Your infinite eyes power the Sun and the Moon. I can see Your form brightening and burning the entire Universe with blazing fire in Your mouth. (11.19)

Comments: While verses (11.16) and (11.18) made references to the Lord spanning infinite spaces and times, this verse states that the Lord's attributes are also infinite. The reference to the Sun and the Moon mirrors the description in the **Purusha Sookta**.

द्यावापृथिव्योरिदमन्तरं हि
व्याप्तं त्वयैकेन दिशश्च सर्वाः ।
दृष्ट्वाऽद्भुतं रूपमुग्रं तवेदं
लोकत्रयं प्रव्यथितं महात्मन् ।। २० ।।

dyāvāpṛthivyor idam antaraṁ hi vyāptaṁ tvayaikena diśaś ca sarvāḥ
dṛṣṭvādbhutaṁ rupam ugraṁ tavedaṁ lokatrayaṁ pra-vyathitaṁ mahātman

Your single form spreads from heaven to earth, it fills the interspace and pervades in all directions. O Greatest

of all souls! Your form is both amazing and threatening. All Your devotees in all three worlds seem to be petrified. (11.20)

Comments: The Lord's form appears threatening as He prepares to lift the burden Mother Earth is carrying. Evil doers are a burden on earth and from time to time the Lord devises ways to lessen this load. The war of the **Mahabharata** is one such instance. The Lord does appear cruel and threatening to evil doers because they are guilty of wicked acts. Realised souls such as Brahma, Rudra who are used to the vision of the Lord are not threatened by this form. In **Bhagavata** [BMP], Canto 7, Prahlada will be praying to Lord Narasimha who would have taken a frightening form while killing the evil demon, Hiranyakashipu. Prahlada states that superior deities who were gathered there (such as Brahma, Rudra) were not frightened by the Lord's form as they were realized souls and were used to viewing such forms of the Lord.

अमी हि त्वां सुरसङ्घा विशन्ति
केचिद्भीताः प्रांजलयो गृणन्ति ।
स्वस्तीत्युक्त्वा महर्षिसिद्धसङ्घा :
स्तुवन्ति त्वां स्तुतिभिः पुष्कलाभिः ।। २१ ।।

amī hi tvāṁ surasaṁghā viśanti kecid bhītāḥ prāñjalayo gṛṇanti
svastīty uktvā maharṣisiddhasaṁghāḥ stuvanti tvāṁ stutibhiḥ puṣkalābhiḥ

Liberated deities are seen entering Your form. Some are seen praying with folded hands out of fear. Many

sages and other heavenly beings are praying to You for the welfare of everyone. (11.21)

Comments: Verse (11.15) described deities sheltered in the Lord and in this verse, deities are described as entering and leaving the Lord's form at will. The reference in verse (11.15) is to deities who are not yet liberated, and the reference in this verse is to deities who are liberated. This is clarified by Sri Rayaru in [GV] following Sri Madhwacharya's [GTN] supported by the epic **Brahmanda Purana**.

रुद्रादित्या वसवो ये च साध्या

विश्वेऽश्विनौ मरुतश्चोष्मपाश्च ।

गन्धर्वयक्षासुरसिद्धसङ्घा

वीक्षन्ते त्वां विस्मिताश्चैव सर्वे ।। २२ ।।

rudrādityā vasavo ye ca sādhyā viśveśvinau marutaś coṣmapāś ca
gandharvayakṣāsurasiddhasaṁghā vīkṣante tvāṁ vismitāś caiva sarve

Rudras, Adityas, Vasus, Sadhyas, Vishwes, Ashwinis, Maruts, Pitrs, Gandharvas, Yakshas, Asuras, and Siddhas are looking at you with amazement. (11.22)

Comments: The term *ooshmapa* is used to describe the Pitr or ancestral deities. This is because these deities consume the vapours from boiling water, hot cooked rice etc., offered by devotees.

रूपं महत्ते बहुवक्त्रनेत्रं

महाबाहो बहुबाहूरुपादम् ।

बहूदरं बहुदंष्ट्राकरालं

दृष्ट्वा लोकाः प्रव्यथितास्तथाऽहम् ।। २३ ।।

rūpaṁ mahat te bahuvaktranetraṁ mahābāho bahubāhūrupādam
bahūdaraṁ bahudañṣṭrākarālaṁ dṛṣṭvā lokāḥ pravyathitās tathāham

नभःस्पृशं दीप्तमनेकवर्णं

व्यात्ताननं दीप्तविशालनेत्रम् ।

दृष्ट्वा हि त्वां प्रव्यथितान्तरात्मा

धृतिं न विन्दामि शमं च विष्णो ।। २४ ।।

nabhaḥspṛśaṁ dīptam anekavarṇaṁ vyāttānanaṁ dīptaviśālanetram
dṛṣṭvā hi tvāṁ pravyathitāntarātmā dhṛtiṁ na vindāmi śamaṁ ca viṣṇo

दंष्ट्राकरालानि च ते मुखानि

दृष्ट्वैव कालानलसन्निभानि ।

दिशो न जाने न लभे च शर्म

प्रसीद देवेश जगन्निवास ।। २५ ।।

daṁṣṭrākarālāni ca te mukhāni dṛṣṭvaiva kālānalasaṁnibhāni
diśo na jāne na labhe ca śarma prasīda deveśa jagannivāsa

O Krishna, Mighty Armed One! Your form is magnificent and huge. It has infinite faces, eyes, shoulders, thighs, feet, abdomens and sharp tusk and teeth. All three worlds are terrified and so am I. (11.23)

O Vishnu! Your form touches the sky, dazzling in many colours with large glowing eyes and mouth wide open. Looking at this, my mind is full of fear. I am trembling, unable to stay steady. (11.24)

O Lord of All Deities! Looking at Your infinite faces glowing like the fire of universal destruction with extended, sharp, strong, piercing teeth, I am losing my bearings. O Supporter of the Universe! Please have mercy on me. (11.25)

Comments: Verse (11.23) refers to the Lord's face, shoulders, thighs, and feet. This is like the description in the **Purusha Sookta** where it was stated that during the creation of the universe, four categories of population with four different nature and qualities were born out of the Lord's face, shoulders, thighs, and feet. Verse (11.24) describes the Lord's mouth as being open since He is preparing to destroy millions during the war and consume them.

अमी च त्वां धृतराष्ट्रस्य पुत्राः
सर्वे सहैवावनिपालसङ्घैः ।
भीष्मो द्रोणः सूतपुत्रस्तथाऽसौ
सहास्मदीयैरपि योधमुख्यैः ।। २६ ।।

amī ca tvāṁ dhṛtarāṣṭrasya putrāḥ sarve sahaivāvanipāla-saṁghaiḥ
bhīṣmo droṇaḥ sūtaputras tathāsau sahāsmadīyair api yo-dhamukhyaiḥ

वक्त्राणि ते त्वरमाणा विशन्ति
दंष्ट्राकरालानि भयानकानि ।

केचिद्विलग्ना दशनान्तरेषु
संदृश्यन्ते चूर्णितैरुत्तमाङ्गैः ।। २७ ।।

vaktrāṇi te tvaramāṇā viśanti daṁṣṭrākarālāni bhayānakāni kecid vilagnā daśanāntareṣu saṁdṛśyante cūrṇitair uttamāṅgaiḥ

Bheeshma, Drona, Karna the son of Soota, and all the sons of Dhrutarashtra, along with many Kings and many brave warriors from our side are all seen running towards Your terrifying mouth which has dreadful, sharp teeth and many are seen with their heads smashed and stuck between Your teeth. (11.26) (11.27)

Comments: The reference to the Kauravas and other warriors seen entering the Lord's open mouth which has sharp, dreadful teeth is a symbolic way of indicating their impending death in the war. A question that arises currently is as follows. If the **Gita** was taught by Lord Krishna to Arjuna before the start of the war, how could Arjuna see the vision of many warriors dying in the war as indicated here. Sri Rayaru in [GV] explains that Arjuna was granted Divine Vision by the Lord so that he could see the His Universal Form. The same Divine Vision also gave Arjuna the ability to see things that would happen in the future.

Sri Rayaru in [GV] explains that deities who have Divine Vision can view things with infinite precision. In the epic **Vishnu Dharma**, there is an episode related to King Puroorava and the Ashwini deities who visit him. The King requests them to wait a short while as he wanted to see them after taking a shower and dressing himself in his royal clothes and ornaments. The deities see him later and laugh at him. The King asks the deities the reason for their reaction. They say that even though the King took

just some time to get himself dressed; he had grown a little older during that time. The implication here is that though everyone grows old every minute of the day no one can see or feel the minute changes in their bodies. But the Ashwini deities because of their divine eyesight were able to see even the minutest change in the King's body during the time that he took to dress himself.

यथा नदीनां बहवोऽम्बुवेगाः

समुद्रमेवाभिमुखा द्रवन्ति ।

तथा तवामी नरलोकवीरा

विशन्ति वक्त्राण्यभिविज्वलन्ति ।। २८ ।।

yathā nadīnāṁ bahavombuvegāḥ samudram evābhimukhā dravanti
tathā tavāmī naralokavīrā viśanti vaktrāṇy abhivijvalanti

यथा प्रदीप्तं ज्वलनं पतङ्गा

विशन्ति नाशाय समृद्धवेगाः ।

तथैव नाशाय विशन्ति लोका-

स्तवापि वक्त्राणि समृद्धवेगाः ।। २९ ।।

yathā pradīptaṁ jvalanaṁ pataṅgā viśanti nāśāya samṛd-dhavegāḥ
tathaiva nāśāya viśanti lokās tavāpi vaktrāṇi samṛd-dhavegāḥ

Just as currents of water from all rivers flood into the ocean, brave warriors from this world are seen hurtling into Your burning mouth from all directions. (11.28)

Just as moths crash into a blazing fire with great speed and perish, many of these warriors are running into your mouth with great speed only to get destroyed. (11.29)

Comments: These two verses identify the warriors who are shown to be entering the Lord's mouth as a symbolic way of describing their imminent death. Verse (11.28) which refers to *veera* (brave) warriors seems to be referring to *sattvic* warriors who are fighting for a just cause, since the act of rivers merging into a majestic ocean is a natural event. Verse (11.29) describes warriors rushing into their deaths just like moths rush towards a blazing fire. This seems to be referring to evil warriors who by nature are drawn to sinful activities even when they know the perils associated with such actions.

लेलिह्यसे ग्रसमानः समन्तात्
लोकान् समग्रान् वदनैर्ज्वलद्भिः ।
तेजोभिरापूर्य जगत्समग्रं
भासस्तवोग्राः प्रतपन्ति विष्णो ।। ३० ।।

lelihyase grasamānaḥ samantāl lokān samagrān vadanair jvaladbhiḥ
tejobhir āpūrya jagat samagraṁ bhāsas tavogrāḥ pratapanti viṣṇo

आख्याहि मे को भवानुग्ररूपो
नमोऽस्तु ते देववर प्रसीद ।
विज्ञातुमिच्छामि भवन्तमाद्यं
न हि प्रजानामि तव प्रवृत्तिम् ।। ३१ ।।

ākhyāhi me ko bhavān ugrarūpo namostu te devavara prasīda
vijñātum icchāmi bhavantam ādyaṁ na hi prajānāmi tava pravṛttim

O Vishnu! You are devouring and swallowing all these warriors in Your fiery mouth. Your fiery energy is spreading and burning the entire universe. (11.30)

Why are You showing me this terrifying form? O Lord of Lords! Please tell me. Please be merciful. I bow my head to you. I would like to understand You better as You are the reason for the existence of this Universe. I cannot understand Your ways. (11.31)

Comments: Verse (11.30) describes the Lord's form which is absolutely terrifying and threatening. Arjuna who had heard about the Lord's compassionate qualities is perplexed. In verse (11.31), He states that while the Lord has described His attributes and qualities earlier, he is unable to understand why He is now displaying such a terrifying form.

Arjuna is a mere Instrument in the War

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
कालोऽस्मि लोकक्षयकृत्प्रवृद्धो
लोकान् समाहर्तुमिह प्रवृत्तः ।
ऋतेऽपि त्वां न भविष्यन्ति सर्वे
येऽवस्थिताः प्रत्यनीकेषु योधाः ।। ३२ ।।

śrībhagavān uvāca
kālosmi lokakṣayakṛt pravṛddho lokān samāhartum iha pravṛttaḥ
ṛtepi tvāṁ na bhaviṣyanti sarve yevasthitāḥ pratyanīkeṣu yodhāḥ

The Lord said:

I am the controller of Time and Space, mighty enough to destroy all the worlds, and I have resolved to destroy

all these warriors here. Excepting you and a few others, all these soldiers will perish. (11.32)

Comments: Lord Krishna responds to Arjuna's question about His form and states that one of His activities is destruction of evil doers. The Lord had declared previously in (4.7) and (4.8) that He would incarnate Himself from time to time to protect virtuous lives and to destroy evil doers. Such a time had come now where evil forces were controlling much of Bharat and the Lord's incarnation as Sri Krishna was designed to destroy the evil and reestablish Dharma. The Lord assures Arjuna that most soldiers would perish in the war with the exception of Arjuna himself and a few others. The Lord uses the term '*api*' meaning 'also' to indicate 'others' who will survive the war. Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies that 'others' refers to Arjuna's four brothers and three warriors from the other side, Ashwatthama, Krutavarma and Krupacharya. This is as per the **Souptika Parva** chapter of the **Mahabharata**.

तस्मात्त्वमुत्तिष्ठ यशो लभस्व
जित्वा शत्रून् भुङ्क्ष्व राज्यं समृद्धम् ।
मयैवैते निहताः पूर्वमेव
निमित्तमात्रं भव सव्यसाचिन् ॥ ३३ ॥

tasmāt tvam uttiṣṭha yaśo labhasva jitvā śatrūn bhuṅkṣva rājyaṁ samṛddham
mayaivaite nihatāḥ pūrvam eva nimittamātraṁ bhava savyasācin

द्रोणं च भीष्मं च जयद्रथं च
कर्णं तथाऽन्यानपि योधवीरान् ।
मया हतांस्त्वं जहि मा व्यथिष्ठा
युध्यस्व जेतासि रणे सपत्नान् ॥ ३४ ॥

droṇaṁ ca bhīṣmaṁ ca jayadrathaṁ ca karṇaṁ tathānyān api yodhavīrān
mayā hatāṁs tvaṁ jahi mā vyathiṣṭhā yudhyasva jetāsi raṇe sapatnān

O Savyasachi (Arjuna, the one who is ambidextrous)! Therefore, lift yourself up and wage this just war. Defeat your enemies and achieve fame. Enjoy the plentiful kingdom. All these warriors have already been killed by Me. You are a mere instrument in this act of war. (11.33)

All brave warriors such as Bheeshma, Drona, Jayadratha, Karna have already been killed by Me. You do not need to grieve. Wage the war and go through the formality of killing them. You will be victorious in this war. (11.34)

Comments: In verse (2.6), Arjuna had expressed doubts as to whether he would win the war. The Lord had instructed him that he should wage the war as it was his duty to do so. Lord Krishna had also stated in verse (2.37), that Arjuna stood to gain regardless of victory or defeat in the war. If he won, he would enjoy ruling the prosperous kingdom, and if he lost his life he would attain heaven for diligently performing his prescribed duty. In these verses, the Lord goes a step further and tells Arjuna that victory was a certainty as He had already planned death for the Kauravas, and Arjuna had only to go through the formality of fighting the war to preserve his fame. In verse (11.34), the Lord explicitly names Kaurava warriors Bheeshma, Drona, Jayadratha, and Karna as the ones whose deaths were preordained. Sri Rayaru clarifies in

[GV] that these warriors were protected with specific boons that would have rendered them impossible to conquer, so Arjuna's apprehension about their invincibility was understandable. The Lord puts Arjuna’s mind at ease by stating that even these warriors would perish in the war (Later in the war, these warriors would encounter unique situations where they would perish without contradicting the powers they possessed due to prior boons).

संजय उवाच ।

एतच्छ्रुत्वा वचनं केशवस्य

कृतांजलिर्वेपमानः किरीटी ।

नमस्कृत्वा भूय एवाह कृष्णं

सगद्गदं भीतभीतः प्रणम्य ।। ३५ ।।

sañjaya uvāca
etac chrutvā vacanaṁ keśavasya kṛtāñjalir vepamānaḥ kirīṭī
namaskṛtvā bhūya evāha kṛṣṇaṁ sagadgadaṁ bhītabhītaḥ praṇamya

Sanjaya said:

Hearing these words from Lord Keshava, Arjuna prayed again to Krishna, shaking with fear, with folded hands, bowed head and a trembling voice. (11.35)

Comments: In response to King Dhrutarashtra’s curiosity about further developments in the war, Sanjaya states that Arjuna who was terrified at the Lord’s magnificent but frightening form addresses the Lord in a

trembling voice. As will be seen later, Arjuna is also concerned that he might have treated Krishna as just a normal friend without being fully aware of His greatness, and this concern could also have led to his fear.

Arjuna's Remorseful Prayer

अर्जुन उवाच ।
स्थाने हृषीकेश तव प्रकीर्त्या
जगत् प्रहृष्यत्यनुरज्यते च ।
रक्षांसि भीतानि दिशो द्रवन्ति
सर्वे नमस्यन्ति च सिद्धसङ्घाः ।। ३६ ।।

arjuna uvāca
sthāne hṛṣīkeśa tava prakīrtyā jagat prahṛṣyaty anurajyate ca
rakṣāṁsi bhītāni diśo dravanti sarve namasyanti ca siddhasaṁghāḥ

कस्माच्च ते न नमेरन् महात्मन्
गरीयसे ब्रह्मणोऽप्यादिकर्त्रे ।
अनन्त देवेश जगन्निवास
त्वमक्षरं सदसत्तत्परं यत् ।। ३७ ।।

kasmāc ca te na nameran mahātman garīyase brahmaṇopy ādikartre
ananta deveśa jagannivāsa tvam akṣaraṁ sadasat tatparaṁ yat

Arjuna said:

O Hrishikesha! The entire universe is dancing and celebrating Your greatness. This is understandable. All

evil demons are running helter-skelter, and all deities such as groups of Siddhas are bowing their heads to You. (11.36)

O Supreme Soul! How can one not bow before You as You are the most supreme being who created even four faced Brahma? You are the One without end, Lord of all Lords, supporter of the Universe, and You are imperishable. You are superior to every entity, manifest and unmanifest, in the universe. (11.37)

Comments: Arjuna prays to the Lord with utmost humility. He recounts the Lord's greatness as the most superior being in the entire universe and the one who created even four faced Brahma. All deities in the universe bow before the Lord Almighty as they owe their existence to Him. In verse (11.37), Arjuna uses the word *Mahatma* to address the Lord. Sri Rayaru in [GV] refers to the scriptures and explains *Mahatma* as *mahat* + *atma* where *mahat* indicates completeness and *atma* has four meanings – the one who spans the entire universe, the one who accepts whatever is offered by devotees, the one who consumes the essence of acceptable offerings, and the one who is eternal.

त्वमादिदेवः पुरुषः पुराण–
स्त्वमस्य विश्वस्य परं निधानम् ।
वेत्ताऽसि वेद्यं च परं च धाम
त्वया ततं विश्वमनन्तरूप ॥ ३८ ॥

tvam ādidevaḥ puruṣaḥ purāṇas tvam asya viśvasya paraṁ nidhānam
vettāsi vedyaṁ ca paraṁ ca dhāma tvayā tataṁ viśvam anantarūpa

वायुर्यमोऽग्निर्वरुणः शशांकः
प्रजापतिस्त्वं प्रपितामहश्च ।
नमो नमस्तेऽस्तु सहस्रकृत्वः
पुनश्च भूयोऽपि नमो नमस्ते ॥ ३९ ॥

vāyur yamognir varuṇaḥ śaśāṅkaḥ prajāpatis tvaṁ prapitāmahaś ca
namo namas testu sahastrakṛtvaḥ punaś ca bhūyopi namo namas te

You are the primordial Lord. You are the One described in the scriptures. You are the shelter for the entire Universe. You know everything. You teach everything. You are the one to be known. You are full of infinite lustre. O One with Infinite Forms! The Universe is filled by You. (11.38)

You are - Vayu, Yama, Agni, Varuna, Chandra, Prajapati, and grandfather to all. I offer my obeisance to You thousands of times, again and again. (11.39)

Comments: In verse (11.38) Arjuna continues his prayer to the Lord. The Lord is everywhere, always full of infinite, auspicious attributes. In verse (11.39), Arjuna describes the Lord as Vayu (form of strength and wisdom), Yama (blemishless), Agni (activator of the inert Universe), Varuna (accepts any offering from devotees), Chandra (full of bliss), Prajapati (ruler of subjects) and Pitamaha (grandfather- father of Brahma who himself is the father to all). He is indwelling in all these deities and He powers

their activities. The deities are in fact named after the Lord indwelling in them as indicated by the meanings above.

नमः पुरस्तादथ पृष्ठतस्ते
नमोऽस्तु ते सर्वत एव सर्व ।
अनन्तवीर्यामितविक्रमस्त्वं
सर्वं समाप्नोषि ततोऽसि सर्वः ॥ ४० ॥

namaḥ purastād atha pṛṣṭhatas te namostu te sarvata eva sarva
anantavīryāmitavikramas tvaṁ sarvaṁ samāpnoṣi tatosi sarvaḥ

I bow in front of You, from behind You and from all directions. You are complete in all respects, with infinite strength. There is no end to Your bravery. You pervade everywhere. Hence You are known as *sarva* (everything). (11.40)

Comments: In verse (11.39), Arjuna describes the Lord's form as intrinsically powering superior deities by the same name. Here Arjuna extends that description to state that the Lord is everywhere and in everything. He specifically addresses the Lord as Sarva (one who is everywhere). Sri Rayaru in [GV] explains that the definition of *Sarva* stated by Arjuna unambiguously clarifies that the reference to Sarva in scriptures such as the **Chandogya Upanishat** (3-14-1), the **Taittireeya** (3-12) should be interpreted as referring to the Lord's attribute of pervading and spanning everywhere in the universe and should not be construed to mean that the Lord Himself is the universe.

सखेति मत्वा प्रसभं यदुक्तं
हे कृष्ण हे यादव हे सखेति ।
अजानता महिमानं तवेदं
मया प्रमादात् प्रणयेन वाऽपि ।। ४१ ।।

sakheti matvā prasabhaṁ yad uktaṁ he kṛṣṇa he yādava he sakheti
ajānatā mahimānaṁ tavedaṁ mayā pramādāt praṇayena vāpi

यच्चापहासार्थमसत्कृतोऽसि
विहारशय्यासनभोजनेषु ।
एकोऽथवाऽप्यच्युत तत्समक्षं
तत्क्षामये त्वामहमप्रमेयम् ।। ४२ ।।

yac cāvahāsārtham asatkṛtosi vihāraśayyāsanabhojaneṣu
ekothavāpy acyuta tatsamakṣaṁ tat kṣāmaye tvām aham aprameyam

पिताऽसि लोकस्य चराचरस्य
त्वमस्य पूज्यश्च गुरुर्गरीयान् ।
न त्वत्समोऽस्त्यभ्यधिकः कुतोऽन्यो
लोकत्रयेऽप्यप्रतिमप्रभाव ।। ४३ ।।

pitāsi lokasya carācarasya tvam asya pūjyaś ca gurur garīyān
na tvatsamosty abhyadhikaḥ kutonyo lokatrayepy apratimaprabhāva

तस्मात्प्रणम्य प्रणिधाय कायं
प्रसादये त्वामहमीशमीड्यम् ।
पितेव पुत्रस्य सखेव सख्युः
प्रियः प्रियायार्हसि देव सोदुम् ।। ४४ ।।

tasmāt praṇamya praṇidhāya kāyaṁ prasādaye tvām aham īśam īḍyam
piteva putrasya sakheva sakhyuḥ priyaḥ priyāyārhasi deva soḍhum

Without knowing Your greatness, thinking of You merely as my friend I have taken liberties and called You thus - Hey Krishna! Hey Yadava! Hey, My Friend!, - sometimes by mistake and sometimes in affection. (11.41)

When relaxing, sleeping, sitting, and eating I have shown disrespect by making fun of You. O Supreme One! You are full of infinite, auspicious attributes. I beg You to forgive me. (11.42)

O Supreme Soul with Unending Abilities! You are the father of this universe for both animate and inanimate objects. You are worthy of worship by all. You are the greatest teacher. There is no one equal to You in all three worlds. How can there be any one more superior? (11.43)

O Lord of Lords! As You are worthy of my worship, just like a father is to a son, a friend to another friend, and a lover to a loved one, please forgive all my mistakes. I beg You with all sincerity. (11.44)

Comments: In these verses, Arjuna expresses his remorse for taking liberties when interacting with Krishna, being unaware of His greatness. Normally when one is relaxing or sleeping, it is common for one to be in a lighter mood. Arjuna is indicating to Krishna that during such light moments he has treated him as any other friend and might not have shown Him proper respect. Arjuna is saying that his behaviour is partly due to his ignorance about Krishna's greatness and partly due to his

friendship. Normally, when one addresses elders, teachers etc., one would not directly call them by their names, but would address them using respectful terms. Arjuna has addressed the Lord as Friend, Yadava etc., and hence is now feeling remorseful. Arjuna begs Krishna to forgive him just as a father would forgive a child, a friend would forgive a friend etc.

अदृष्टपूर्वं हृषितोऽस्मि दृष्ट्वा
भयेन च प्रव्यथितं मनो मे ।
तदेव मे दर्शय देव रूपं
प्रसीद देवेश जगन्निवास ।। ४५ ।।

adṛṣṭapūrvaṁ hṛṣitosmi dṛṣṭvā bhayena ca pravyathitaṁ mano me
tad eva me darśaya deva rūpaṁ prasīda deveśa jagannivāsa

किरीटिनं गदिनं चक्रहस्तम्
इच्छामि त्वां द्रष्टुमहं तथैव ।
तेनैव रूपेण चतुर्भुजेन
सहस्त्रबाहो भव विश्वमूर्ते ।। ४६ ।।

kirīṭinaṁ gadinaṁ cakrahastaṁ icchāmi tvāṁ draṣṭum ahaṁ tathaiva
tenaiva rūpeṇa caturbhujena sahastrabāho bhava viś-vamūrte

Seeing Your form which I have never seen before, I am overjoyed. But I am also frightened, and my mind is shaken. O Lord, Abode of Everyone! Please show me Your form that I am used to seeing so far. (11.45)

O One with Infinite Shoulders! I would like to see Your normal form with four shoulders wearing a crown and holding a mace and a disc. (11.46)

Comments: Arjuna states that he is overjoyed to have had the unique opportunity to view the Lord's Universal Form. But at the same time, he is frightened looking at the Lord's threatening form even though the purpose of that was the destruction of evil forces. Arjuna is also remorseful about his playful behaviour with Krishna during their times together. Arjuna now requests Krishna to appear again in His prior form where He was four shouldered, wearing a crown and holding a mace and a disc in His hands.

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
मया प्रसन्नेन तवार्जुनेदं
रूपं परं दर्शितमात्मयोगात् ।
तेजोमयं विश्वमनन्तमाद्यं
यन्मे त्वदन्येन न दृष्टपूर्वम् ॥ ४७ ॥
śrībhagavān uvāca
mayā prasannena tavārjunedaṁ rūpaṁ paraṁ darśitam āt-mayogāt
tejomayaṁ viśvam anantam ādyaṁ yan me tvadanyena na dṛṣṭapūrvam

न वेदयज्ञाध्ययनैर्न दानै-
र्न च क्रियाभिर्न तपोभिरुग्रैः ।
एवंरूपः शक्य अहं नृलोके
द्रष्टुं त्वदन्येन कुरुप्रवीर ॥ ४८ ॥

na veda yajñādhyayanair na dānaiḥ na ca kriyābhir na tapobhir ugraiḥ
evaṁrūpaḥ śakya ahaṁ nṛloke draṣṭuṁ tvadanyena kurupravīra

मा ते व्यथा मा च विमूढभावो
दृष्ट्वा रूपं घोरमीदृङ्‌ ममेदम्‌ ।
व्यपेतभीः प्रीतमनाः पुनस्त्वं
तदेव मे रूपमिदं प्रपश्य ॥ ४९ ॥

mā te vyathā mā ca vimūḍhabhāvo dṛṣṭvā rūpaṁ ghoram īdṛṅ mamedam
vyapetabhīḥ prītamanāḥ punas tvaṁ tad eva me rūpam idaṁ prapaśya

The Lord said:

O Arjuna! As I Am pleased with you, I showed you My amazing Universal Form which is full of infinite energy and has no beginning or end. No one else has seen this form before. (11.47)

O Arjuna, Bravest Among Kurus! The Universal form that you were able to see has not been visible to anyone in this world. One cannot see this even if one has carried out elaborate sacrifices or practiced intense austerities or made significant charitable donations or undertaken deep study of the scriptures. (11.48)

Do not be frightened and bewildered by seeing My terrifying Universal form. Set aside your fears and put your mind at ease as I will now appear in the form which you have seen before. (11.49)

Comments: The Lord states that Arjuna was able to view His Universal form because of his devotion and spiritual evolution. Sri Rayaru in [GV] cautions that one should not literally interpret verses (11.47) and (11.48) to conclude that no one other than Arjuna has seen the Lord's Universal Form. After all, in verses (11.20) and (11.23), it was clearly stated that everyone in the universe was terrified by looking at the Lord's Universal Form. Hence, the proper interpretation of (11.47) and (11.48) is that no one would have seen the Lord in the same way as Arjuna was able to see Him. This means that those who are less capable and hence have lesser eligibility would have experienced the vision of Lord with much lesser precision and clarity. Also, Sri Madhwacharya in [GTN] with reference to the **Brahmanda Purana** clarifies that superior deities such as Brahma and Rudra would have viewed the Lord's Universal Form with much higher precision and clarity. Additionally, later in verse (11,52), the Lord confirms that other deities also would be viewing the Lord's Universal Form just like Arjuna.

संजय उवाच

इत्यर्जुनं वासुदेवस्तथोक्त्वा

स्वकं रूपं दर्शयामास भूयः ।

आश्वासयामास च भीतमेनं

भूत्वा पुनः सौम्यवपुर्महात्मा ।। ५० ।।

sañjaya uvāca
ity arjunaṁ vāsudevas tathoktvā svakaṁ rūpaṁ darśayām āsa bhūyaḥ
āśvāsayām āsa ca bhītam enaṁ bhūtvā punaḥ saumyavapur mahatma

Sanjaya said:

Lord Vasudeva having said thus, appeared before Arjuna in His earlier form. Lord Almighty Krishna having appeared thus pacified Arjuna. (11.50)

Comments: Sanjaya relays the next development as an answer to King Dhrutarashtra's curiosity. The Lord, responding to Arjuna's request in verse (11.46), puts him at ease by reappearing in His own human like form that Arjuna was used to seeing before.

अर्जुन उवाच ।
दृष्ट्वेदं मानुषं रूपं तव सौम्यं जनार्दन ।
इदानीमस्मि संवृत्तः सचेताः प्रकृतिं गतः ॥ ५१ ॥
arjuna uvāca
dṛṣṭvedaṁ mānuṣaṁ rūpaṁ tava saumyaṁ janārdana
idānīm asmi saṁvṛttaḥ sacetāḥ prakṛtiṁ gataḥ

Arjuna said:

O Janardana! I am relieved after seeing Your calm human like form. I am back to my natural state. (11.51)

Comments: The Lord exists in all His forms at all times. To put Arjuna's mind at ease, the Lord reappears in His calm human like form. Arjuna is now relieved to see Krishna in the form that he was used to seeing.

The Glory of Devotion

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
सुदुर्दर्शमिदं रूपं दृष्टवानसि यन्मम ।
देवा अप्यस्य रूपस्य नित्यं दर्शनकाङ्क्षिणः ॥ ५२ ॥

śrībhagavān uvāca
sudurdarśam idaṁ rūpaṁ dṛṣṭvān asi yan mama
devā apy asya rūpasya nityaṁ darśanakāṅkṣiṇaḥ

नाहं वेदैर्न तपसा न दानेन न चेज्यया ।
शक्य एवंविधो द्रष्टुं दृष्टवानसि मां यथा ।। ५३ ।।

nāhaṁ vedair na tapasā na dānena na cejyayā
śakya evaṁvidho draṣṭuṁ dṛṣṭavān asi māṁ yathā

The Lord Said:

Even deities aspire to see My Universal Form that you were fortunate to see. Looking at My form, some experience happiness and others feel both happiness and fear. (11.52)

Neither by study of the **Vedas**, nor by difficult penance nor by charity and not even by sacrificial rituals can I be seen the way you were able to see Me. (11.53)

Comments: In (11.52), the Lord states that it is exceedingly difficult for one to get an opportunity to physically see Him. Even superior deities are constantly striving to experience a vision of the Lord's Universal Form. Among those who can view the Lord, some deities such as Brahma, Rudra etc., are able to see Him and experience joy. Others feel both joy and fear by looking at the Lord. Arjuna himself states in (11.45) that he was both happy and petrified looking at the Lord's form. In (11.53), the Lord explains the difficulty in getting an opportunity to view His Universal Form, saying that even study of the **Vedas**, performing difficult penance, donating to charity, or performing extensive ritual sacrifices cannot guarantee such an opportunity.

भक्त्या त्वनन्यया शक्य अहमेवंविधोऽर्जुन ।
ज्ञातुं द्रष्टुं च तत्त्वेन प्रवेष्टुं च परंतप ॥ ५४ ॥
bhaktyā tv ananyayā śakya aham evaṁvidhorjuna
jñātuṁ drasṭuṁ ca tattvena pravesṭuṁ ca paraṁtapa

O Parantapa! Only by single minded devotion can one understand Me, see Me, and attain My abode. (11.54)

Comments: If one is not guaranteed a vision of the Lord even after undertaking difficult tasks to please Him as indicated in (11.53), how can one obtain this vision of the Lord? This verse answers by stating that one needs to surrender to Him with sincere, unconditional, unparalleled devotion to experience a direct vision of the Lord. The Lord uses the adjective '*ananya*' meaning unparalleled or incomparable to describe the path of devotion. This implies that one should consider the path of devotion to be superior to all other paths such as the path of knowledge, the path of action, donating to charity etc. This also means that these other paths are also required for one to realize the Lord but are not sufficient in themselves. They must be accompanied by single pointed devotion.

This verse has been recognized by Sri Madinur Vishnu Teertha in [BGS] as summarizing this entire chapter. Reference to the word '*drashtum*' (to see) signifies the vision of the Lord's Universal Form. This verse also identifies unparalleled devotion as the way to experience divine vision. Hence, this verse is indeed a summary of this entire chapter.

मत्कर्मकृन्मत्परमो मद्भक्तः सङ्गवर्जितः ।
निर्वैरः सर्वभूतेषु यः स मामेति पाण्डव ॥ ५५ ॥

matkarmakṛn matparamo madbhaktaḥ saṅgavarjitaḥ
nirvairaḥ sarvabhūteṣu yaḥ sa mām eti pāṇḍava

O Pandava! One who performs all duties only for My sake, who knows Me as the Supreme One, who is My ardent devotee, who has relinquished worldly pleasures and who has no enmity towards anyone will indeed reach My abode. (11.55)

Comments: The Lord concludes the sermon in this glorious chapter by reiterating the qualities of a seeker who will succeed in reaching the Lord's abode.

Summary of Chapter 11

After listening to the Lord's teachings on His divine manifestations, His amazing activities in terms of creation of the universe etc., in the previous chapter, Arjuna is naturally curious to physically see the Lord's form. (11.1-11.4). The Lord now exhibits His grand Universal Form which is the core of this chapter termed *Vishwa Roopa Darshana* (Vision of The Lord's Universal Form). The Lord empowers Arjuna with divine vision as one cannot view Him with ordinary eyes (11.8). Arjuna views the Lord' amazing, incredible, Universal Form spanning the entire universe with countless heads, limbs etc. The descriptions of the Lord's Universal Form mirrors that in the **Rig Vedic** hymn the **Purusha Sookta**. Arjuna describes the grand sight and compares the Lord's energy to that of thousands of rising suns (11.12). He is able to see the entire universe sheltering inside the Lord including all the deities starting from four faced Brahma (11.15). He also sees many deities entering the Lord and praying to the Lord with utmost humility (11.21). Everyone is frightened

at seeing the Lord's terrifying form. The Lord indicates in (11.32) that He (taking the name of Kala) is about to perform the act of destroying the evil forces who had caused the rise of immorality in the world. This was the reason for His frightening form. The Lord further tells Arjuna that He had already killed all the leaders of the Kaurava army excepting a few, thereby clearing Arjuna's doubts about winning the war. Waging the war is now a formality for Arjuna (11.33). Arjuna, after seeing the Lord's form states that while he feels blessed, he continues to be terrified and threatened by the Lord's frightening form. He is also remorseful that he has not treated Krishna with proper respect as he was not fully aware of His greatness (11.41) and asks for forgiveness (11.44). Arjuna also requests Krishna to appear again in His earlier form that he was used to seeing (11.46). The Lord states that it is exceedingly difficult for anyone to experience a direct vision of His Universal Form. Even great deities strive extremely hard to experience such a vision (11.52). Undertaking even difficult tasks such as diligent study of the **Vedas**, performing difficult rituals, donating to charity etc., will not help one to experience such a direct vision, unless they are accompanied by unparalleled, pure, unconditional devotion to the Lord (11.54). The last few verses in this chapter act as a bridge to the next chapter which focusses on the path of devotion.

।। इति एकादशोऽध्यायः ।।

End of Chapter 11

द्वादशोऽध्यायः – भक्तियोगः
Chapter 12 - The Path of Devotion

Chapter Introduction: This chapter of 20 verses is known as *Bhakti Yoga* (The Path of Devotion). In chapter 10, the Lord described His special presence in beings and objects which gave them superiority among peers, and in chapter 11 the Lord revealed His Universal Form to Arjuna to convince him of His strength and powers. The Lord also states that it is exceedingly difficult for one to behold a vision of His Universal Form and Arjuna was indeed fortunate to have been granted that Divine Vision. In the concluding verses of chapter 11, the Lord declares that sincere devotion towards Him is the best way for a seeker to reach Him. This chapter expands on the concept of devotion and is hence termed the Path of Devotion. In verse (7.23), it was stated that those who propitiate other deities will achieve only temporary fruits and not everlasting bliss. However, in the scriptures it is stated that the Lord's consort Goddess Mahalakshmi, who is ever liberated is worshipped by all deities from Brahma onwards and that she grants liberation to the eligible. A natural question that would arise is about the effects of propitiating Goddess Lakshmi who is also known to grant *moksha* to devotees. Arjuna (on behalf of other seekers) seeks clarification on the benefits of propitiating Goddess Lakshmi who is the governing deity for the principle of the unmanifest (*avyakta*). The Lord responds to Arjuna's question in verses (12.2) to (12.7) of this chapter and concludes that worshipping Lord Narayana is an easier way to attain *moksha* as pleasing Mahalakshmi is difficult. Further, Lakshmi operates under the Lord Almighty's

control. One should propitiate Sri Lakshmi and other deities as part of the Lord's entourage for maximum effect. *Bhakti* or devotion is focusing one's mind on the Lord. The Lord teaches us methods of worshipping Him through action (*karma yoga*), through knowledge (*jnana yoga*), through meditation (*dhyana yoga*) and through devotion (*bhakti yoga*). The last eight verses in this chapter describe the characteristics of an ideal devotee who is dear to the Lord.

Worshipping Goddess Mahalakshmi and Lord Almighty

अर्जुन उवाच ।
एवं सततयुक्ता ये भक्तास्त्वां पर्युपासते ।
ये चाप्यक्षरमव्यक्तं तेषां के योगवित्तमाः ।। १ ।।

arjuna uvāca
evaṁ satatayuktā ye bhaktās tvāṁ paryupāsate
ye cāpy akṣaram avyaktaṁ teṣāṁ ke yogavittamāḥ

Arjuna said:

Some seekers propitiate the Lord Almighty with extreme devotion and some others focus on worshipping Goddess Mahalakshmi (also known as *akshara, avyakta*), the imperishable, unmanifest principle of divinity. Among these, which group has a better understanding of the path to liberation? (12.1)

Comments: In chapter 7, verse (7.23), the Lord clearly stated that propitiating other deities will only yield temporary fruits and not the permanent bliss experienced in *moksha*. In verse (11.55), the Lord indicated that one

should consider Him the supreme entity and surrender to Him with unconditional devotion to achieve liberation. However, in many instances in the **Vedas**, it is clearly stated that Goddess Lakshmi also grants liberation. Further, she is superior to all other deities such as Brahma and Rudra, and is responsible for the creation of the universe. In verse (7.5), it was stated that Goddess Lakshmi controls all inert nature. She is superior to all other deities as she is ever liberated and has an imperishable existence (indicated by the adjective *akshara* in this verse). Given these facts, while some seekers focus exclusively on the Lord Almighty, others focus on worshipping Goddess Lakshmi. A natural question one would have is about the best path for the seeker, given that both the Lord (directly) and Goddess Lakshmi (indirectly) are known to lead one to salvation.

The Easier Path to Liberation

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
मय्यावेश्य मनो ये मां नित्ययुक्ता उपासते ।
श्रद्धया परयोपेतास्ते मे युक्ततमा मताः ॥ २ ॥

śrībhagavān uvāca
mayy āveśya mano ye māṁ nityayuktā upāsate
śraddhayā parayopetāḥ te me yuktatamā matāḥ

The Lord said:

In My opinion, those seekers who worship Me with supreme faith, and conduct their prescribed duties and meditation with the mind immersed in Me, are superior. (12.2)

Comments: The Lord responds to Arjuna's question in the following six verses, (12.2) – (12.7). In this verse, He categorically states that those who propitiate Him with supreme devotion have a better understanding of the path to liberation compared to those who focus only on propitiating Goddess Lakshmi, the imperishable, unmanifest principle. The Lord provides detailed reasoning for this in the following verses.

ये त्वक्षरमनिर्देश्यम् अव्यक्तं पर्युपासते ।
सर्वत्रगमचिन्त्यं च कूटस्थमचलं ध्रुवम् ।। ३ ।।

ye tv akṣaram anirdeśyaṁ avyaktaṁ paryupāsate
sarvatragam acintyaṁ ca kūṭasthaṁ acalaṁ dhruvam

सन्नियम्येन्द्रियग्रामं सर्वत्र समबुद्धयः ।
ते प्राप्नुवन्ति मामेव सर्वभूतहिते रताः ।। ४ ।।

saṁniyamyendriyagrāmaṁ sarvatra samabuddhayāḥ
te prāpnuvanti mām eva sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ

The immutable, unmanifest principle does not perish; is beyond description and pervades everywhere; it is beyond comprehension, has no limited form like the sky, and is eternal. Those who worship this principle with control over the senses, with mental equanimity and desiring the welfare of everyone will also attain Me. (12.3) (12.4)

Comments: Verse (12.3) lists eight superior attributes of Goddess Lakshmi – imperishable, indefinable, unmanifest, omnipresent, incomprehensible, immutable, constant, and eternal. As per the scriptures, propitiating Goddess Lakshmi will also lead one to liberation. These

verses clarify that those who propitiate Goddess Lakshmi who has these superior attributes will also attain the Lord, but indirectly. Those who propitiate Goddess Lakshmi must have strict sense control, mental equanimity, and desire welfare for all.

क्लेशोऽधिकतरस्तेषाम् अव्यक्तासक्तचेतसाम् ।
अव्यक्ता हि गतिर्दुःखं देहवद्भिरवाप्यते ॥ ५ ॥
kleśodhikataras teṣāṁ avyaktāsaktacetasām
avyaktā hi gatir duḥkhaṁ dehavadbhir avāpyate

ये तु सर्वाणि कर्माणि मयि सन्न्यस्य मत्पराः ।
अनन्येनैव योगेन मां ध्यायन्त उपासते ॥ ६ ॥
ye tu sarvāṇi karmāṇi mayi saṁnyasya matparaḥ
ananyenaiva yogena māṁ dhyāyanta upāsate

तेषामहं समुद्धर्ता मृत्युसंसारसागरात् ।
भवामि न चिरात् पार्थ मय्यावेशितचेतसाम् ॥ ७ ॥
teṣāṁ ahaṁ samuddhartā mṛtyusaṁsārasāgarāt
bhavāmi na cirāt pārtha mayy āveśitacetasām

It takes great effort to propitiate the unmanifest principle properly. Attaining the final goal of eternal bliss is exceedingly difficult for one following the path of propitiating only this principle. (12.5)

O Partha! One who surrenders all activities to Me, considering Me as the Supreme One, worshipping Me with single minded devotion and focusing the mind on Me will be able to cross the ocean of death bound samsara, through My grace. (12.6) (12.7)

Comments: The Lord clarifies that achieving liberation by only propitiating the unmanifest principle is exceedingly difficult. Sri Madhwacharya in his [GB] states many reasons for this which are explained by Sri Rayaru in [GV].

* Goddess Lakshmi operates under the control of the Lord as stated in (7.5), (15.17) and hence propitiating only her is an indirect path to liberation.
* One must observe extremely strict measures in terms of controlling one's mind and senses, maintaining mental equanimity etc., as any dilution in these stipulations will hinder a seeker in obtaining Goddess Lakshmi's grace for achieving liberation. These stipulations are detailed in verses (6.7), (6.8) etc.
* Propitiating the Lord is easier as He pardons devotees who are unable to adhere strictly to stipulations in worship. The Lord will ensure that such devotees will, in due course of time, overcome their shortcomings (6.40).
* One who propitiates the Lord Almighty with the same effort that would be spent in propitiating Goddess Lakshmi will achieve liberation sooner.

Sri Madhwacharya in [GB] quotes passages from the **Sama Veda** (*Madhuchhandasa* and *Ayasya* branches) to support these interpretations. Sri Vidyamanya Teertha in his [GPM] states that those who only propitiate Goddess Lakshmi may get distracted by the wealth that they may receive from her which makes it very hard for such seekers to exert control over their mind and senses.

In conclusion, worshipping the Lord directly is an easier way to attain liberation compared to the indirect

way of pleasing the Lord through Goddess Lakshmi. It must be noted that one must worship Goddess Lakshmi and other deities such as Vayudeva, Rudra etc. also, but with a conviction that all these deities are part of the Lord's entourage. It should also be noted that in the benediction of **Gita Vivruti** [GV], Sri Rayaru explicitly states – '*Lakshmi Narayanam Natva* ….' which translates to – I offer my obeisance to Goddess Lakshmi and Lord Narayana.

Ways to Reach the Lord

मय्येव मन आधत्स्व मयि बुद्धिं निवेशय ।
निवसिष्यसि मय्येव अत ऊर्ध्वं न संशयः ॥ ८ ॥
mayy eva mana ādhatsva mayi buddhiṁ niveśaya
nivasiṣyasi mayy eva ata ūrdhvaṁ na saṁśayaḥ

अथ चित्तं समाधातुं न शक्नोषि मयि स्थिरम् ।
अभ्यासयोगेन ततो मामिच्छाप्तुं धनंजय ॥ ९ ॥
atha cittaṁ samādhātuṁ na śaknoṣi mayi sthiram
abhyāsayogena tato mām ichāptuṁ dhanaṁjaya

अभ्यासेऽप्यसमर्थोऽसि मत्कर्मपरमो भव ।
मदर्थमपि कर्माणि कुर्वन् सिद्धिमवाप्स्यसि ॥ १० ॥
abhyāsepy asamarthosi matkarmaparamo bhava
madartham api karmāṇi kurvan siddhim avāpsyasi

अथैतदप्यशक्तोऽसि कर्तुं मद्योगमाश्रितः ।
सर्वकर्मफलत्यागं ततः कुरु यतात्मवान् ॥ ११ ॥
athaitad apy aśaktosi kartuṁ madyogam āśritaḥ
sarvakarmaphalatyāgaṁ tataḥ kuru yatātmavān

Focus your mind exclusively on Me. If this is not possible, direct your intellect towards Me (to acquire knowledge about Me). You will be able to attain My abode in due course. Let there be no doubt about this. (12.8)

O Dhananjaya! If you are unable to focus your mind on Me singularly, with an intent on reaching Me as the ultimate goal, perform repeated practice (*abhyāsayogena*) to focus your mind on Me. (12.9)

If repeated practice to focus your mind on Me is not possible, then engage in activities that please Me (such as austerity, worship, service, charity etc.), for My sake, considering Me as supreme. Thereby you will eventually attain Me. (12.10)

If it is not possible for one to perform activities such as intense austerity, worship etc., then one should offer all their actions to Me with no expectations. (12.11)

Comments: After having established that the best path for a devotee to attain liberation is by directly propitiating the Lord, a natural question that would arise is about the best way to do that. In these four verses, the Lord describes a progressive method for a devotee to worship Him with singular mental focus. In verse (12.8), the Lord states the superiority of meditation with mental concentration (*dhyana yoga*) as previously described in Chapter 6. If one is not able to achieve this, then one should try learning about the Lord through scriptural studies (*jnana yoga - paroksha*). If these are not possible, a devotee should practice repeatedly to achieve these (12.9). If for some reason, one is not able to perform such practice, then the

Lord states in (12.10), that the devotee should at least engage in physical activities that would please Him (such as worshipping Him with flowers, service charity etc.) as these activities are not taxing on the mind and intellect. For those who do not have deep conviction in the Lord, but would rather focus on propitiating other deities, the Lord states in (12.11) that such a devotee should at least perform such propitiation without expectations and submit the fruits of this action to Him. In verse (7.22), the Lord had stated that even those who propitiate other deities will receive their rewards only through the Lord Himself.

Sri Madinur Vishnu Teertha in his [BGS] identifies (12.8) as the core verse in this chapter. Here the Lord has indicated that the best path for a devotee to attain liberation is through direct propitiation of Him with singular mental focus (meditation) on Him. Thus, this verse contains the core principles of this chapter.

श्रेयो हि ज्ञानमभ्यासात् ज्ञानाद्ध्यानं विशिष्यते ।
ध्यानात्कर्मफलत्यागस्त्यागाच्छान्तिरनन्तरम् ॥ १२ ॥

śreyo hi jñānam abhyāsāj jñānād dhyānaṁ viśiṣyate
dhyānāt karmaphalatyāgas tyāgāc chāntir anantaram

Acquiring proper knowledge is better than repetitions of actions without proper knowledge. Meditation with firm conviction on the Lord is better than acquisition of knowledge. Performing prescribed duties while relinquishing fruits of action is better than mere meditation. Such selfless duties combined with deep meditation on the Lord are the ways to attain the Lord's abode. (12.12)

Comments: The Lord concludes His discussion on the methods for a devotee to achieve liberation in this verse by summarizing the various steps involved in attaining *moksha,* and the relative importance among such steps. The final destination for every living being is to attain liberation from bondage, a state where one would experience eternal bliss. The way to attain *moksha* is by realizing direct vision and direct knowledge of the Lord (*aparoksha jnana*). Such direct knowledge is achievable for one who is immersed in meditation of the Lord with singular mental focus (*dhyana*). Such meditation is possible for someone who has learnt about the Lord (indirectly through study of scriptures, teachings from a Guru etc. – *paroksha jnana*). One must repeatedly practice meditation and scriptural studies to obtain an understanding of the Lord. One will be able to focus one's minds on meditation and scriptural studies if one involves oneself in activities that please Him (such as worshipping the Lord, service to society, charity etc.).

Characteristics of an Ideal Devotee

अद्वेष्टा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च ।
निर्ममो निरहंकारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी ॥ १३ ॥
adveṣṭā sarvabhūtānāṁ maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca
nirmamo nirahaṁkāraḥ samaduḥkhasukhaḥ kṣamī

सन्तुष्टः सततं योगी यतात्मा दृढनिश्चयः ।
मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः ॥ १४ ॥
saṁtuṣṭaḥ satataṁ yogī yatātmā dṛḍhaniścayaḥ
mayy arpitamanobuddhir yo madbhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ

One who has no enmity towards any other being, who is friendly to everyone, who feels others' pain, who is devoid of selfishness and ego, who has equanimity with regard to victory and defeat in worldly matters, who forgives others' mistakes, who is always contented, who is involved in performing prescribed duties sincerely, who is in meditative contemplation, who has control over the mind, who has deep conviction in spiritual principles and who has surrendered mind and intellect to Me is indeed very dear to Me. (12.13) (12.14)

Comments: In the following verses, the Lord identifies the characteristics of an ideal devotee who is dear to Him. Many of these characteristics appeared in previous chapters such as (2.55) – (2.61), (4.22), (5.18) to (5.21), (6.7) to (6.9). The Lord had also stated the nature of a devotee dear to Him in (7.17). All these characteristics are now consolidated in one place in the following eight verses (12.13) to (12.20).

In verse (12.13), the Lord describes the characteristics of a compassionate devotee as one who

* Has no enmity towards anyone.
* Anticipates distress and protects friends from it.
* Is ever compassionate.
* Does not claim ownership of any object.
* Is not under delusion on attributes not present.
* Treats happiness and sadness with equal disdain.
* Has patience.

In verse (12.14), the Lord continues to describe the characteristics of a devotee who has a firm mind and conviction as one who

* Is ever contented.
* Performs prescribed duties and intense meditation with spiritual knowledge.
* Has control over the mind.
* Has conviction in supremacy of the Lord.
* Has mind and intellect focused on the Lord.
* Is deeply devoted to the Lord.

यस्मान्नोद्विजते लोको लोकान्नोद्विजते च यः ।
हर्षामर्षभयोद्वेगैर्मुक्तो यः स च मे प्रियः ।। १५ ।।
yasmān nodvijate loko lokān nodvijate ca yaḥ
harṣāmarṣabhayodvegair mukto yaḥ sa ca me priyaḥ

One who is not perturbed by the goings on in this world, who does not perturb this world, and who is not impacted by pleasure, anger, fear, or anxiety is indeed dear to Me. (12.15)

Comments: This verse expands on the characteristics of a *stita prajna* (a person with mental equanimity) that was described earlier in verses (2.54) onwards.

अनपेक्षः शुचिर्दक्ष उदासीनो गतव्यथः ।
सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः ।। १६ ।।
anapekṣaḥ śucir dakṣa udāsīno gatavyathaḥ
sarvārambhaparityāgī yo madbhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ

One who does not crave for worldly pleasures, who is pure internally and externally, who is carefree while performing duties, whose mind is not perturbed and who avoids unnecessary activities, is indeed dear to Me. (12.16)

Comments: The Lord uses the term *sarvarambha parityaagi* to describe a devotee who avoids unnecessary activities. Sri Rayaru in [GV] describes the four actions to be avoided by such a devotee. They are – (i) activities not dear to the Lord, (ii) performing activities with ego, (iii) performing activities with expectation on the rewards, and (iv) not submitting all activities to the Lord. Such a devotee is indeed very dear to the Lord.

यो न हृष्यति न द्वेष्टि न शोचति न काङ्क्षति ।
शुभाशुभपरित्यागी भक्तिमान् यः स मे प्रियः ।। १७।।

yo na hṛṣyati na dveṣṭi na śocati na kāṅkṣati
śubhāśubhaparityāgī bhaktimān yaḥ sa me priyaḥ

One who never gets elated (with worldly riches), who never hates others, who never complains (on not achieving expected results), who never desires the prohibited, who always avoids all activities – auspicious or inauspicious, is indeed dear to Me. (12.17)

Comments: Verse (12.15) identified some characteristics of an ideal devotee. This verse clarifies that such characteristics should always be present in a devotee. Sri Rayaru in [GV] explains the context for the Lord declaring that His devotees should avoid both auspicious (*shubha*) and inauspicious (*ashubha*) activities. The implication is that one should avoid even auspicious activities (such as performing rituals for temporary rewards) if they end up

in entangling a devotee. One should only aspire for divine knowledge, detachment (towards worldly matters) and devotion to the Lord.

समः शत्रौ च मित्रे च तथा मानापमानयोः ।
शीतोष्णसुखदुःखेषु समः सङ्गविवर्जितः ॥ १८ ॥
samaḥ śatrau ca mitre ca tathā mānāpamānayoḥ
śītoṣṇasukhaduḥkheṣu samaḥ saṅgavivarjitaḥ

तुल्यनिन्दास्तुतिर्मौनी सन्तुष्टो येन केनचित् ।
अनिकेतः स्थिरमतिर्भक्तिमान् मे प्रियो नरः ॥ १९॥
tulyanindāstutir maunī saṁtuṣṭo yena kenacit
aniketaḥ sthiramatir bhaktimān me priyo naraḥ

One who treats with equanimity both friends and foes, insults and praise, heat and cold, pleasure and pain, who is thoughtful and content with whatever is given, who is equipoised and who is unconditionally devoted to Me is indeed very dear to Me. (12.18) (12.19)

Comments: These characteristics were highlighted previously in (6.7), (6.8), (6.9) etc., when describing an ideal *dhyana yogi* (one who is immersed in concentrated meditation of the Lord). The qualities of friendship in a friend or enmity in a foe are not inherent in friends and foes but are due to the Lord who endows one with these qualities based on one's innate nature.

ये तु धर्म्यामृतमिदं यथोक्तं पर्युपासते ।
श्रद्दधाना मत्परमा भक्तास्तेऽतीव मे प्रियाः ॥ २०॥
ye tu dharmyāmṛtam idaṁ yathoktaṁ paryupāsate
śraddadhānā matparamā bhaktās tetīva me priyāḥ

The methods indicated here are the ways to worship the Lord Almighty and achieve liberation. The Lord states that one who observes these methods sincerely, with deep faith and devotion in Him, is indeed very dear to Him. (12.20)

Comments: Any devotee who has any of these characteristics described in verses (12.13) to (12.19) is dear to the Lord. Hence, a devotee who has all these identified characteristics is indeed extremely dear to the Lord and will easily reach Him.

Summary of Chapter 12

In chapter 10, the Lord described His divine presence in beings and objects which give them superiority among their peers, and in chapter 11, the Lord revealed His Universal Form to Arjuna to convince him of His strength and powers. The Lord also stated that it is exceedingly difficult for one to achieve the vision of His Universal Form and that Arjuna was indeed fortunate to have been granted that Divine Vision. In the concluding verses of chapter 11, the Lord declares that sincere devotion towards Him is the best way for a seeker to reach Him. This chapter expands on the concept of devotion and is hence termed the Path of Devotion. In verse (7.23), it was stated that those who propitiate other deities will achieve only temporary fruits and not everlasting bliss. However, in the scriptures it is stated that the Lord's consort, Goddess Mahalakshmi who is ever liberated is worshipped by all deities from Brahma onwards and she grants liberation to the eligible. A natural question that would arise is about the effects of propitiating Goddess Lakshmi who is also

known to grant *moksha* to devotees. Arjuna (on behalf of other seekers) seeks clarification on the benefits of propitiating Goddess Lakshmi who is the governing deity for the principle of the unmanifest (*avyakta*). The Lord responds to Arjuna's question in verses (12.2) to (12.7) of this chapter and concludes that worshipping Lord Almighty Narayana is an easier way to attain *moksha* as pleasing Mahalakshmi is difficult. Further, Lakshmi operates under the Lord's control. One should propitiate Goddess Lakshmi and other deities as part of the Lord's entourage for maximum benefit. Bhakti or devotion is focusing one's mind on the Lord. In verses (12.8) – (12.12), The Lord teaches Arjuna the methods of expressing devotion using facilities such as intellect, studying, performing prescribed duties etc. The last eight verses in this chapter describe the characteristics of an ideal devotee who is dear to the Lord. Many of these characteristics were stated in previous chapters and are consolidated here in a unified manner for easy reference.

।। इति द्वादशोऽध्यायः ।।

End of Chapter 12

त्रयोदशोऽध्यायः – क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञयोगः
Chapter 13 - The Field and The Knower of the Field

Chapter Introduction: This chapter of 35 verses is termed *Kshetra Kshetrajna Yoga* (The Field and the Knower of the Field). As indicated in the introductory chapter, Sri Rayaru in [GV] has provided an excellent categorization of the 18 chapters in Gita by dividing them into 3 groups of 6 chapters each. Chapters 7-12 dealt primarily with the topic of the Lord's attributes and greatness as seen in Chapter 10 (The Lord's Divine Manifestations), Chapter 11 (The Lord's Universal Form) etc. After all, the goal of every living being is to realize the Lord to achieve liberation. Chapters 1-6 discussed the various means for one to realize the Lord, such as the path of knowledge, the path of action, the path of devotion etc. These last six chapters (Chapter 13 to 18) expand on some of the important concepts covered in the previous chapters. In chapter 2, verses (2-12) onwards, the attributes of individual souls were described. In chapters 10, 11, 12 etc., the Lord's forms, attributes and greatness were discussed. In verse (7.4), the attributes of eightfold inert nature were discussed. Arjuna now wants to understand more about the interrelationships between the three entities – the Lord Almighty, individual souls, and inert nature. The Lord responds to Arjuna's questions on the entities in verses (13.2) to (13.24). The interrelationships between these three entities form the philosophical basis for the principle of fivefold differences (*pancha bheda*).

The Field and The Knower of the Field

अर्जुन उवाच ।
प्रकृतिं पुरुषं चैव क्षेत्रं क्षेत्रज्ञमेव च ।
एतद्वेदितुमिच्छामि ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं च केशव ॥ १ ॥

arjuna uvāca
prakṛtiṁ puruṣaṁ caiva kṣetram kṣetrajñam eva ca
etat veditum icchhāmi jñānaṁ jñeyaṁ ca keśava

Arjuna said:

O Keshava! I would like to know more about – inert nature, the individual, the field of activity, the knower of the field of activity, knowledge, and the object of knowledge. (13.1)

Comments: Arjuna requests details on the following six topics – *prakruti* (inert nature) and *purusha* (individual soul), *kshetra* (field of activity) and *kshetrajna* (one who fully knows about *kshetra*), *jnana* (knowledge and prerequisites to obtain knowledge) and *jneya* (the one who is to be known). In verses (13.2) to (13.7), the Lord provides details on *kshetra* and *kshetrajna* and verses (13.8) to (13.19) cover the topics of *jnana* and *jneya*. Verses (13.20) to (13.24) are related to *prakruti* and *purusha*. The remaining verses describe the interaction and interrelationships among these entities.

The word *purusha* can refer to both the individual soul (*jeevatma*) and the Lord Almighty (*paramatma*) based on the context of its use, as seen from verses (13.22) where it refers to the individual soul and (13.23), where it refers to the Lord. Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies that the word

purusha in this verse refers to the individual soul. Also, the word *jnana* which ordinarily refers to knowledge should be taken to mean the method to obtain knowledge. This will be evident from the Lord's response in verses (13.8) to (13.12), where the Lord identifies 20 different characteristics needed to obtain knowledge.

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
इदं शरीरं कौन्तेय क्षेत्रमित्यभिधीयते ।
एतद्यो वेत्ति तं प्राहुः क्षेत्रज्ञ इति तद्विदः ।। २ ।।
śrībhagavān uvāca
idaṁ śarīraṁ kaunteya kṣetram ity abhidhīyate
etad yo vetti taṁ prāhuḥ kṣetrajña iti tadvidaḥ

The Lord said:

O Son of Kunti! This body made of inert nature is the field of activity. One who has a good understanding of the constituents of this field of activity is the knower. (13.2)

Comments: The Lord uses the word *shareera* (physical body) to identify the entity that forms *kshetra* (the field of activity), based of word derivation. Here, *shareera* = *shar* (the entity subject to feelings) + *eera* (the entity owing its existence to the Lord). The knower of the field of activity is termed *kshetrajna*, the one who knows *kshetra* which is derived from *ksheeyate* (the entity with indwelling Lord Almighty).

The Lord is The Knower

क्षेत्रज्ञं चापि मां विद्धि सर्वक्षेत्रेषु भारत ।
क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञयोर्ज्ञानं यत्तज्ज्ञानं मतं मम ।। ३ ।।

kṣetrajñaṁ cāpi māṁ viddhi sarvakṣetreṣu bhārata
kṣetrakṣetrajñayor jñānaṁ yat taj jñānaṁ mataṁ mama

O Bharata! In all fields of activity, I am the knower. Preeminent knowledge is knowing both *kshetra* (field of activity) and *kshetrajna* (knower of this field of activity). (13.3)

Comments: Since the physical body (*kshetra*) belongs to a living being, can that living being be called *kshetrajna* (knower of the field of activity)? No. The Lord clarifies by emphatically stating that He is the knower of the field of activity. Further, **Vishnu Sahasra Nama**, verse 2 identifies *kshetrajna* as one of the names of the Lord. Also, by using the qualifier *sarva* (all) before the term *kshetra*, it is clarified that the universe of inert nature also comes under the definition of field of activity.

The Field and Its Transformations

तत्क्षेत्रं यच्च यादृक्च यद्विकारि यतश्च यत् ।
स च यो यत्प्रभावश्च तत्समासेन मे शृणु ।। ४ ।।
tat kṣetraṁ yac ca yādṛk ca yadvikāri yataś ca yat
sa ca yo yatprabhāvaś ca tat samāsena me śṛṇu

What is this field of activity? How is it described? What are its transformations? Who governs them (referring to *kshetrajna*)? How is He described? What is are His influences? Let Me answer these in brief. (13.4)

Comments: The Lord now resolves to provide details of the field of activity in terms of its composition, transformation, governing entities, influencing entities etc. The fact that the field of activity is under the control of other entities, confirms its dependent nature.

ऋषिभिर्बहुधा गीतं छन्दोभिर्विविधैः पृथक् ।
ब्रह्मसूत्रपदैश्चैव हेतुमद्भिर्विनिश्चितैः ॥ ५ ॥
ṛṣibhir bahudhā gītaṁ chandobhir vividhaiḥ pṛthak
brahmasūtrapadaiś caiva hetumadbhir viniścitaiḥ

Great sages have sung praises about the nature of the field of activity. The **Vedas** also describe them separately. The **Brahma Sutras** have given definitive rulings on this topic. (13.5)

Comments: The Lord states that the concepts described in His teachings have been well known based on proclamations from various sages and descriptions in scriptures such as the **Vedas**, **Brahma Sutras** etc. In that sense, these are authentic and recorded teachings.

महाभूतान्यहंकारो बुद्धिरव्यक्तमेव च ।
इन्द्रियाणि दशैकं च पञ्च चेन्द्रियगोचराः ॥ ६ ॥
mahābhūtāny ahaṁkāro buddhir avyaktam eva ca
indriyāṇi daśaikaṁ ca pañca cendriyagocarāḥ

इच्छा द्वेषः सुखं दुःखं सङ्घातश्चेतना धृतिः ।
एतत्क्षेत्रं समासेन सविकारमुदाहृतम् ॥ ७ ॥
icchā dveṣaḥ sukhaṁ duḥkhaṁ saṁghātaś cetanā dhṛtiḥ
etat kṣetraṁ samāsena savikāram udāhṛtam

The field of activity is comprised of the following - the five basic elements of nature (earth, water, fire, space, air), the principles of individuation, consciousness, intellect and the three qualities of nature which comprise the unmanifest. Along with these are the eleven sense organs (five organs of perception, five organs of action and mind),

five objects of the sense organs (form, smell, sound, taste, touch), emotions of desire, disdain, pleasure, pain, the physical body, mental propensity, and determination (all these entities have governing deities). (13.6) (13.7)

Comments: The Lord describes the composition of the field of activity. It contains both physically observable elements such as the five basic elements of nature, inner faculties, and qualities/attributes. All these make up a personality. The unmanifest entity is comprised of the three qualities of nature, namely, *sattv* (pious), *rajas* (passion), and *tamas* (ignorance). The principle of intellect is part of the four inner faculties which are mind (*manas*), intellect (*buddhi*), individuation (*ahankara*), and memory (*chitta*). The mind causes confusion, and the intellect helps in discrimination.

In verse (13.34), the Lord had also indicated that He would describe the entities that govern the components of the field of activity. They are governed by deities who cause the entities to act. The deities who control the components of the field of activity are described by Sri Rayaru in [GV] as follows-

1. The five basic elements of nature: space (Ganapathy), air (Mareechi), fire (Vahni), water (Varuna), and earth (Dhara Devi)

2. The four cosmic principles: *avyakta* - unmanifest (Lakshmi), *mahat* – cosmic intelligence (Brahma), *ahankara* - individuation (Rudra), *buddhi* - intellect (Parvati)

3. The mind (Skanda, Indra, Aniruddha – son of Kama)

4. 5 sense organs of perception : ear (Moon), skin (Marut), eyes (Sun), tongue (Varuna), nose (Ashwini twins)

5. 5 sense organs of action: voice (Agni), hands (Maruts), Feet (Yagna, Shambhu), excretory organs (Yama), organs of reproduction (Shiva, Manu)

6. 5 objects of sense organs: sound, touch, form, taste, smell (five children of Shiva)

The above 25 principles result in the effects of emotions indicated in (13.7). The governing entities for these effects are indicated below:

Desire (Sreedevi and Bharatidevi), disdain (Kali), sadness (Dwapara), happiness (Mukhya Vayu), determination and boldness (Saraswati, Bharati), mental propensity (Sreedevi), physical Body (other deities)

The relative gradations of these governing deities were alluded to in verse (3.42). All these deities operate under the control of the Lord as indicated previously in verse (3.43).

<u>A note on the principles of *mahat* and *buddhi*:</u> Many times, the term *buddhi* is used to refer to both *mahat* and *buddhi*. However, *mahat* and *buddhi* are different principles with *mahat* referring to cosmic intelligence and *buddhi* referring to normal intelligence. In that sense, *mahat* whose governing deity is deity Brahma is responsible for special, divine knowledge (*vijnana - aparoksha*), and *buddhi* whose governing deity is Parvati is responsible for acquired knowledge (*jnana - paroksha*). The concepts of *jnana* and *vijnana* were covered in Chapter 7. Also, many

principles have multiple governing deities, with one primary governing deity and one or more secondary deities. In all cases, the Lord is the controlling deity.

Prerequisites for Knowledge

अमानित्वम् अदम्भित्वम् अहिंसा क्षान्तिरार्जवम् ।
आचार्योपासनं शौचं स्थैर्यमात्मविनिग्रहः ॥ ८ ॥
amānitvam adambhitvam ahiṁsā kṣāntir ārjavam
ācāryopāsanaṁ śaucaṁ sthairyam ātmavinigrahaḥ

इन्द्रियार्थेषु वैराग्यम् अनहंकार एव च ।
जन्ममृत्युजराव्याधिदुःखदोषानुदर्शनम् ॥ ९ ॥
indriyārtheṣu vairāgyam anahaṁkāra eva ca
janmamṛtyujarāvyādhiduḥkhadoṣānudarśanam

असक्तिरनभिष्वङ्गः पुत्रदारगृहादिषु ।
नित्यं च समचित्तत्वम् इष्टानिष्टोपपत्तिषु ॥ १० ॥
asaktir anabhiṣvaṅgaḥ putradāragṛhādiṣu
nityaṁ ca samacittatvam iṣṭāniṣṭopapattiṣu

मयि चानन्ययोगेन भक्तिरव्यभिचारिणी ।
विविक्तदेशसेवित्वम् अरतिर्जनसंसदि ॥ ११ ॥
mayi cānanyayogena bhaktir avyabhicāriṇī
viviktadeśasevitvam aratir janasaṁsadi

अध्यात्मज्ञाननित्यत्वं तत्त्वज्ञानार्थदर्शनम् ।
एतज्ज्ञानमिति प्रोक्तम् अज्ञानं यदतोऽन्यथा ॥ १२ ॥
adhyātmajñānanityatvaṁ tattvajñānārthadarśanam
etaj jñānam iti proktam ajñānaṁ yad atonyathā

The prerequisite attributes for one to achieve true knowledge are as follows - humility, modesty, non-violence, tolerance, sincerity, servitude towards teachers, internal and external cleanliness, steadfastness, detachment from sense pleasures, absence of ego, awareness of birth, death, old age and diseases, non-attachment to possessions, equipoise during gain and pain, deep single minded devotion in Me (Krishna), keeping aloof, staying away from crowds, always thinking about the Lord. All these attributes comprise knowledge and the means to achieve knowledge. Anything contrary to these constitutes ignorance. (13.8) (13.9) (13.10) (13.11) (13.12)

Comments: From verse (13.3) onwards, the Lord provided details about the entity (the Lord) that stimulates and powers the components of the field of activity. To understand the attributes and nature of that entity, it is important for a seeker to have requisite mental and physical discipline. These are represented by the 20 attributes of an enlightened person identified in these 5 verses and they form the path or procedure or ways (*sadhana*) for one to understand the Lord. An ideal seeker is one who:

1. is humble
2. is unpretentious
3. practices non-violence
4. is tolerant
5. is sincere in action (physical, vocal, mental)
6. respects and serves teachers and scholars
7. has internal and external cleanliness
8. has conviction in righteousness

9. has self-control
10. renounces sensual desires
11. is devoid of ego
12. is always aware of the distressful conditions of birth, death, old age, and disease
13. is detached from worldly possessions
14. is not excessively attached to family and possessions
15. is equanimous in the face of pleasure and pain
16. is exclusively devoted to the Lord
17. prefers to be in solitude
18. stays from crowds indulging in useless activities (not dear to the Lord)
19. is constantly involved in learning about the Lord
20. is immersed in contemplation of scriptures for realizing the Lord

The Object of Knowledge

ज्ञेयं यत्तत् प्रवक्ष्यामि यज्ज्ञात्वाऽमृतमश्नुते ।
अनादिमत्परं ब्रह्म न सत्तन्नासदुच्यते ॥ १३ ॥

jñeyaṁ yat tat pravakṣyāmi yaj jñātvāmṛtam aśnute
anādimat paraṁ brahma na sat tan nāsad ucyate

Now I will describe that principle which is to be known (the object of knowledge), knowing which one will attain the nectar of immortality. That object is the Supreme Lord who has no beginning and is eternal. This principle is distinct from entities that have form (*sat*) and those that are formless (*asat*). (13.13)

Comments: Lord Krishna clarifies that He is the object of knowledge and hence is termed *jneya* (the one to be known). The Lord identifies Himself as *jneya* but uses the qualifier *anadi matparam* (the one who has no beginning and who is Supreme) as in verse (8.3). Of course, in verse (7.7) etc., He had already declared that there is no one superior to Him and hence there is no need to repeat that attribute. Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies that the Lord is distinct from entities that have form and those that are formless. The entities that have form are the three basic elements of nature (earth, water, fire) and those that are formless are the two remaining basic elements of nature (air, space). This is a way of indicating that the Lord is above and beyond the influence of nature.

सर्वतः पाणिपादं तत् सर्वतोऽक्षिशिरोमुखम् ।
सर्वतः श्रुतिमल्लोके सर्वमावृत्य तिष्ठति ॥ १४ ॥
sarvataḥ pāṇipādaṁ tat sarvatokṣiśiromukham
sarvataḥ śrutimal loke sarvam āvṛtya tiṣṭhati

The object of knowledge (Lord Almighty) pervades everywhere and has legs, hands, eyes, ears, mouths, and heads everywhere. It spans the universe. (13.14)

Comments: If the Lord is different both from entities with form and those without form, how is He to be visualized? This verse answers by stating that the Lord indeed spans everywhere with all organs, however, these organs are transcendental (*aprakruta*) and not *prakruta* (composed of material nature). The Lord had made His Universal Form visible to Arjuna and other eligible souls as was described in Chapter 11.

सर्वेन्द्रियगुणाभासं सर्वेन्द्रियविवर्जितम् ।
असक्तं सर्व(भृच्चैव)भुक्चैव निर्गुणं गुणभोक्तृ च ॥ १५ ॥
sarvendriyaguṇābhāsaṁ sarvendriyavivarjitam
asaktaṁ sarvabhṛc caiva nirguṇaṁ guṇabhoktṛ

It (the object of knowledge) activates all sense organs and objects of sense perception. It does not have any sense organs. It is not impacted by anything and consumes everything. It is devoid of attributes and is full of attributes (13.15)

Comments: The Lord continues His description of the object of knowledge. While (13.14) dealt with the Lord's form, this verse is about the Lord's attributes and seems to imply antithetical qualities. Sri Rayaru in [GV] provides rationalization for these seemingly contradictory descriptions. The Lord not having sense organs is referring to Him not having sense organs made of material nature as His organs are transcendental in nature. Similarly, while He consumes the positive essence of all activities, He is not bound by actions. And He is devoid of attributes as He is beyond the three attributes of nature (*sat, rajas, tamas*). He is full of infinite, auspicious attributes.

बहिरन्तश्च भूतानामचरं चरमेव च ।
सूक्ष्मत्वात् तदविज्ञेयं दूरस्थं चान्तिके च तत् ॥ १६ ॥
bahir antaś ca bhūtānām acaraṁ caram eva ca
sūkṣmatvāt tad avijñeyaṁ dūrasthaṁ cāntike ca tat

It exists both inside and outside of all beings. It is mobile and stationary at the same time. It is extremely minute hence cannot be perceived by sense organs. It is very far and at the same time, very near. (13.16)

Comments: The Lord is present in all living beings and exists outside of them, pervading the entire universe. He is termed stationary in the sense that He does not experience transformation in His attributes.

अविभक्तं च भूतेषु विभक्तमिव च स्थितम् ।
भूतभर्तृ च तज्ज्ञेयं ग्रसिष्णु प्रभविष्णु च ।। १७ ।।
avibhaktaṁ ca bhūteṣu vibhaktam iva ca sthitam
bhūtabhartṛ ca taj jñeyaṁ grasiṣṇu prabhaviṣṇu ca

It resides in different beings in an undivided form but appears to have different forms. It holds and supports all beings. It pervades everywhere and fills everything. It is to be known at all times. It consumes everything (at the time of dissolution of the universe) and creates everything (at the time of creation of the universe). (13.17)

Comments: The Lord is present in all beings in an undivided form (*avibhaktam*) but appears to have different (*vibhaktam*) forms. The use of the term '*eva*' in this verse refers to the Lord appearing to have different forms. Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies that learned ones know the Lord as having undivided form with multiple incarnations of the same form with no difference. Ignorant ones consider these as different.

ज्योतिषामपि तज्ज्योतिस्तमसः परमुच्यते ।
ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं ज्ञानगम्यं हृदि सर्वस्य विष्ठितम् ।। १८ ।।
jyotiṣām api taj jyotis tamasaḥ param ucyate
jñānaṁ jñeyaṁ jñānagamyaṁ hṛdi sarvasya viṣṭhitam

It is the light of even bright objects (such as the Sun), beyond darkness (such as ignorance, death), omniscient,

self-illuminating, is reachable through knowledge and it especially resides in everyone's heart. (13.18)

Comments: The object of knowledge (The Lord Almighty) is a self-illuminating divine light that powers all luminous objects in the universe such as the Sun, and as stated in the **Vedas**, it is beyond ignorance, death, and material nature. It is the embodiment of all knowledge and knows Itself fully. How can one reach such an entity? This verse answers by stating *jnanagamyam* (the Lord is reachable through spiritual, divine knowledge). In verse (13.16), it was stated that the Lord exists both inside and outside of living beings. In this verse, it is clarified that the Lord resides inside every living being within the heart (*hrudi*). Sri Rayaru in [GV] quotes the **Brahma Sutras (1.2.7)** to explain the Lord's existence in a minute form as well as an immeasurable one spanning the entire universe with a comparison to sky which occupies all spaces.

इति क्षेत्रं तथा ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं चोक्तं समासतः ।
मद्भक्त एतद्विज्ञाय मद्भावायोपपद्यते ॥ १९ ॥

iti kṣetraṁ tathā jñānaṁ jñeyaṁ coktaṁ sanāsataḥ
madbhakta etad vijñāya madbhāvāyopapadyate

I have thus described in brief, the field of activity, knowledge, and the object of knowledge. My devotees who properly understand these principles will reach My abode. (13.19)

Comments: The Lord concludes His sermon on the topics that Arjuna had identified in verse (13.1), namely, *kshetra* (field of activity) and *kshetrajna* (one who fully knows about *kshetra*), but does not explicitly indicate

kshetrajna here, as it is included in *jneya*. Verses (13.2) to (13.7), covered the details of *kshetra* and *kshetrajna* and verses (13.8) to (13.19) covered the topics of *jnana* and *jneya*. The word *jnana* is used to mean both knowledge and the prerequisites for knowledge and these were covered in verses (13-8) to (13-11), and verse (13.12) respectively. The Lord also states that His devotees who properly understand and live by these principles will reach Him. It must be noted that mere scholarship on these topics is not enough for one to reach the Lord. They must be incorporated in a seeker's life. Such a person is indeed a true devotee of the Lord.

Nature and Being

प्रकृतिं पुरुषं चैव विद्ध्यनादी उभावपि ।
विकारांश्च गुणांश्चैव विद्धि प्रकृतिसम्भवान् ।। २० ।।
prakṛtiṁ puruṣaṁ caiva viddhy anādi ubhāv api
vikārāñś ca guṇāṁś caiva viddhi prakṛtisaṁbhavān

Know that nature and being are both eternal. Their transformations and the three qualities (gunas) are all due to nature. (13.20)

Comments: In the next five verses (13.20) – (13.24), the Lord answers Arjuna's question from verse (13.1) regarding *prakruti* (nature) and *purusha* (being). *Prakruti* can mean both insentient nature and sentient nature. Likewise, *purusha* can mean both the individual soul and the Supreme Soul (Lord Almighty). The appropriate interpretation depends on the context in which these words are used. Verse (13.6) described *prakruti* (nature), and verse (13.7) described its transformations. These constitute

the physical body and personality of *purusha* (the living being – individual soul). Both nature and individual souls have no beginning and have always existed.

कार्यकारणकर्तृत्वे हेतुः प्रकृतिरुच्यते ।
पुरुषः सुखदुःखानां भोक्तृत्वे हेतुरुच्यते ।। २१ ।।
kārya kāraṇa kartṛtve hetuḥ prakṛtir ucyate
puruṣaḥ sukhaduḥkhānāṁ bhoktṛtve hetur ucyate

Creation of an individual's physical body and sense organs is performed by sentient nature (Goddess Mahalakshmi), and the experience of emotions by an individual is due to the Lord. (13.21)

Comments: This verse describes the interaction between the individual soul, nature (inert and sentient) and the Lord. Again, as stated in the comments on the previous verse, *prakruti* can mean both inert nature and sentient nature and, *purusha* can mean both individual soul and the supreme soul (Lord Almighty). Accordingly, Sri Rayaru in [GV] provides two interesting interpretations.

While the Lord Almighty is primarily responsible for the creation of living beings and for the experience of their emotions, Goddess Lakshmi also has a role to play. She has a higher role in creation as compared to consumption or experiencing happiness or sadness by living beings. Hence, she is indicated as the cause for the creation of living beings.

Alternately, this verse can also be interpreted to mean as follows. Inert nature is the material cause in the physical creation of living beings, and living beings consume or experience emotions such as happiness and sadness.

पुरुषः प्रकृतिस्थो हि भुङ्क्ते प्रकृतिजान् गुणान् ।
कारणं गुणसङ्गोऽस्य सदसद्योनिजन्मसु ।। २२ ।।
puruṣaḥ prakṛtistho hi bhuṅkte prakṛtijān guṇān
kāraṇaṁ guṇasaṅgosya sadasadyonijanmasu

It is well known that the individual soul residing in the body, comprised of the elements of nature, experiences emotions through contact with the three attributes of nature. It is then reborn in pious or unholy families depending on the level of attachment with such emotions. (13.22)

Comments: The use of the letter '*hi*' in the first line indicates that the impacts of the elements of nature on the emotions experienced by a living being are known through experience. An individual experiences emotions such as happiness or sadness due to the impact of the attributes of nature such as *sattv*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Excessive attachment to such emotions will entangle an individual. For example, individuals who experience happiness may focus exclusively on accumulating worldly riches to ensure everlasting happiness which prevents them from performing activities that please the Lord. Their actions impact the circumstances of their succeeding births.

उपद्रष्टाऽनुमन्ता च भर्ता भोक्ता महेश्वरः ।
परमात्मेति चाप्युक्तो देहेऽस्मिन्पुरुषः परः ।। २३ ।।
upadraṣṭānumantā ca bhartā bhoktā maheśvaraḥ
paramātmeti cāpyukto dehesmin puruṣaḥ paraḥ

The Lord resides in all individuals and is a witness to their activities. He activates and propels every action

based on a soul's innate abilities. He consumes the fruits of all activities and He is omnipotent. (13.23)

Comments: Verse (13.4) raised may questions on the field of activity, the knower etc. One of the questions was about the entity who governs the field of activity. The Lord answers this question by stating that He is the entity that governs all activities in all beings, and He is also the consumer of all these activities. The previous verse (13.22) indicated that interactions with the effects of the qualities of nature determine the future birth of an individual. This verse clarifies that the qualities of nature are material causes and the instrumental cause is the Lord. As stated in comments to verse (13.20), the word *purusha* can refer to either a living being or the Lord Almighty and the appropriate interpretation depends on the context. In this verse, *purusha* refers to the Lord due to the use of the adjective *para* (supreme).

य एवं वेत्ति पुरुषं प्रकृतिं च गुणैः सह ।
सर्वथा वर्तमानोऽपि न स भूयोऽभिजायते ॥ २४ ॥

ya evaṁ vetti puruṣaṁ prakṛtiṁ ca guṇaiḥ saha
sarvathā vartamānopi na sa bhūyobhijāyate

One who understands that the individual souls and the Supreme One are different, who understands nature (sentient and insentient) and acts accordingly, will not be reborn regardless of one's state and condition during one's lifetime. (13.24)

Comments: Verses (13.20) to (13.23) described the interaction between *purusha* (living being) and *prakriti* (sentient and insentient nature). Together with previous verses which described the interaction of these entities

with the Lord, one can understand the relationship between these three entities. The Lord states that one who has a proper understanding of these concepts will achieve liberation even if one has have strayed onto wrong paths in their lifetime. Many times, even the learned ones due to force of circumstances (such as a curse) might stray away from the right path. Such beings will in due course of time, through the Lord's grace, get back to the right path and move towards liberation.

ध्यानेनात्मनि पश्यन्ति केचिदात्मानमात्मना ।
अन्ये सांख्येन योगेन कर्मयोगेन चापरे ॥ २५ ॥
dhyānenātmani paśyanti kecid ātmānam ātmanā
anye sāṁkhyena yogena karmayogena cāpare

अन्ये त्वेवमजानन्तः श्रुत्वाऽन्येभ्य उपासते ।
तेऽपि चातितरन्त्येव मृत्युं श्रुतिपरायणाः ॥ २६ ॥
anye tvevam ajānantaḥ śrutvānyebhya upāsate
tepi cātitaranty eva mṛtyuṁ śrutiparāyaṇāḥ

Some visualize the Lord residing in their bodies through their intellect and through meditation. Some visualize the Lord through the path of knowledge. Some visualize the Lord in their duties (Work is Worship). (13.25)

Those who cannot visualize the Lord through the above means, worship the Lord by learning about Him from scholars. Even those, who rely only on acquiring knowledge about the Lord through listening to scriptures, will cross this ocean of worldly affliction. (13.26)

Comments: Since one needs to experience a direct vision of the Lord to attain divine, spiritual knowledge,

this verse identifies the different paths taken by seekers in their spiritual journey. Some visualize the Lord through concentrated meditation (*dhyana*). Some visualize the Lord through intense study, contemplation, and analysis of scriptures (*jnana*). Some visualize the Lord through performance of prescribed duties without expectations (*karma*).

Sri Rayaru in [GV] quotes Sri Madhwacharya's [GTN] for a second interpretation of this verse. Some sages visualize the Lord in their hearts through meditation and through their innate talent (*pratibha*) of novel interpretations of scriptures. Deities, through their innate talent of discovering newer interpretations of scriptures, can visualize the Lord without a need for vocal instruction from their superiors. Some who are superior among rulers perform their prescribed duties such as protecting their citizens during attack from enemies and performance of sacrifices (such as *Ashwamedha*). They visualize the Lord who appears before them to consume their offerings during such sacrifices.

Verse (13.26) addresses the situation of those who are not as talented as the deities indicated in (13.25). Such seekers also benefit greatly from learning about the Lord through vocal instructions from their teachers and can ultimately cross the ocean of worldly miseries. This indicates the power of *shravana* or vocal instruction. Deities starting from Brahma have gradations in not only their physical form but also in their innate talent. For example, Lord Brahma and Lord Vayudeva are endowed with 32 superior qualities in their physical form. Other deities have lesser superior qualities in their physical

forms. Likewise, Lord Brahma and Vayu have the highest innate talent (*pratibha*) among all living beings and can visualize and meditate on the Lord without any explicit vocal instruction. But it is observed that even these great deities are often listening to Vedic teachings from the Lord. They do this as a respect to the Lord to earn His grace and to develop even deeper conviction in their understanding of Him.

Sentient Nature and the Lord Almighty

यावत् सञ्जायते किञ्चित् सत्त्वं स्थावरजङ्गमम् ।
क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञसंयोगात् तद्विद्धि भरतर्षभ ॥ २७ ॥

yāvat saṁjāyate kiṁcit sattvaṁ sthāvarajaṅgamam
kṣetrakṣetrajñasaṁyogāt tad viddhi bharatarṣabha

O Superior Among Bharatas! Know that all entities in the universe, movable and immovable, are created out of the union of sentient nature and the Lord Almighty. (13.27)

Comments: The Lord continues to answer the question posed in (13.27) regarding the field of activity, its origins, its transformations etc. This verse describes the process of creation of living beings. The union of *kshetrajna* (the Lord Almighty) and *kshetra* (the sentient nature embodied by Goddess Lakshmi) results in the creation of all entities in the universe. The word *kshetra* which was previously interpreted to mean the physical body of living beings can also be interpreted to mean Goddess Lakshmi. It should be noted that in a later verse (14.3), the Lord explicitly indicates that He and His consort are responsible for the creation of all living beings.

The Individual Soul and the Supreme Being

समं सर्वेषु भूतेषु तिष्ठन्तं परमेश्वरम् ।
विनश्यत्स्वविनश्यन्तं यः पश्यति स पश्यति ॥ २८ ॥
samaṁ sarveṣu bhūteṣu tiṣṭhantaṁ parameśvaram
vinaśyatsv avinaśyantaṁ yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati

समं पश्यन् हि सर्वत्र समवस्थितमीश्वरम् ।
न हिनस्त्यात्मनाऽऽत्मानं ततो याति परां गतिम् ॥ २९ ॥
samaṁ paśyan hi sarvatra samavasthitam īśvaram
na hinasty ātmanātmānaṁ tato yāti parāṁ gatim

The same Lord Almighty resides in all beings. Even when these living beings perish, the Lord continues existence as He is imperishable. The one who knows this is indeed knowledgeable. (13.28)

One who knows the Lord as being defectless, full of infinite auspicious attributes, and residing in equal measure in all, will never lose knowledge and will never experience downfall. Such a person will be on the right path (13.29)

Comments: In verse (13.3), the Lord indicated that He resides in all beings as *kshetrajna*. However, living beings experience different emotions such as happiness and sadness in varying proportions. These verses explain that regardless of the differing experiences in different living beings, the Lord exists uniformly in everyone. Sri Rayaru in [GV] quotes the **Brahma Sutra** (3.2.11) which states that the Lord who exists in different places and in different beings has no difference among His forms.

प्रकृत्यैव च कर्माणि क्रियमाणानि सर्वशः ।
यः पश्यति तथाऽऽत्मानम् अकर्तारं स पश्यति ॥ ३० ॥
prakṛtyaiva ca karmāṇi kriyamāṇāni sarvaśaḥ
yaḥ paśyati tathātmānam akartāraṁ sa paśyati

All activities of living beings are performed by the Lord Almighty Himself using the elements of nature, based on their innate abilities. One who is aware of this dependency on the Lord is truly knowledgeable. (13.30)

Comments: This verse clarifies that the difference in birth situations experienced by living beings is primarily due to their differing innate natures (and resulting activities) and not due to any partiality on the part of the Lord. Sri Rayaru in [GV] quotes the **Brahma Sutra** (2.1.35) to support the argument that the Lord does not exhibit partiality towards anyone.

This verse also describes the doership of activities performed by living beings. Rayaru in [GV] provides two interpretations for this verse based on the phrase '*atmanam akartaram'*. It was stated previously in comments on verse (6.5), that the word '*atma*' has many meanings and the two meanings applicable here are – individual soul and Supreme Soul (Lord Almighty). With these two meanings, the phrase '*atmanam akartaram'* can be interpreted as follows -

Ones who are considered truly knowledgeable are aware that -

1. The Lord who activates the individual beings to perform their activities is Himself not activated by anyone else (*akartaram*)

2. Living beings cannot perform any activities independently (*akartaram*).

This important verse is identified by Sri Madinur Vishnu Teertha in his [BGS] as comprising the core concepts in this chapter.

यदा भूतपृथग्भावम् एकस्थमनुपश्यति ।
तत एव च विस्तारं ब्रह्म सम्पद्यते तदा ॥ ३१ ॥
yadā bhūtapṛthagbhāvam ekastham anupaśyati
tata eva ca vistāraṁ brahma saṁpadyate tadā

One who realizes that multitudes of different living beings exist inside, and are created by, the same Lord is deemed to be on the right path to reach the Lord's abode. (13.31)

Comments: The Lord not only activates all living beings, He is also the supporter of multitudes of living beings and in that sense, they are said to exist inside Him. Sri Rayaru explains in [GV] that the use of the qualifier '*pritak*' (different) when describing various living organisms (*bhootanam*), refers to the varying nature of individual souls (*jiva-jiva bheda*) which is one of the essential features of the *pancha bheda* (the fivefold differences) principle. This will be explained at the end of this chapter.

अनादित्वान्निर्गुणत्वात् परमात्माऽयमव्ययः ।
शरीरस्थोऽपि कौन्तेय न करोति न लिप्यते ॥ ३२ ॥
anāditvān nirguṇatvāt paramātmāyam avyayaḥ
śarīrasthopi kaunteya na karoti na lipyate

He is imperishable. Hence the Lord, even though existing inside an individual will not be impacted by the defects of that individual. The activities of individuals do not taint the Lord. (13.32)

Summary: The previous verse alluded to the differences amongst individual souls and between individual souls and the Lord. This verse purports to answer many questions that may arise from superficial interpretations in scriptures that seem to indicate identity among individual souls and the Lord. Sri Rayaru in [GV] quotes Sri Madhwacharya's [GTN] and advances five arguments to illustrate the difference between individual souls and the Lord.

1. This verse uses the word '*shareerastha*' to refer to individual souls who have physical bodies comprised of the elements of nature and are subject to birth. The Lord is referred to as '*anadi*' (birthless). This concept was described in (10.3).

2. Individual souls are influenced by the three qualities of nature (*guna*) as indicated in verses (13.20) to (13,22). The Lord is referred to as '*nirguna*' (the one beyond the three qualities of nature). This concept is discussed in (7.13) and (14.19).

3. This verse uses the word '*shareerastha*' to refer to individual souls who have physical bodies comprised of the elements of nature and hence are subject to decay and death. The Lord is referred to as '*avyaya*' (imperishable). This concept was discussed previously in (2.17).

4. The Lord independently causes the activities of individual souls who by themselves cannot perform

any activity. The Lord's activities are not with any expectations as indicated by the phrase '*na karoti*'. The Lord has no obligations to perform any activities. This concept was indicated in (3.22).

5. Even though the Lord is the cause of activities in everyone, He Himself is not tainted by the actions of individual souls as indicated by the phrase '*na lipyate*'. This was also indicated in verses (4.14), (9.9) and (13.30).

यथा सर्वगतं सौक्ष्म्याद् आकाशं नोपलिप्यते ।
सर्वत्रावस्थितो देहे तथाऽऽत्मा नोपलिप्यते ।। ३३ ।।

yathā sarvagataṁ saukṣmyād ākāśaṁ nopalipyate
sarvatrāvasthito dehe tathātmā nopalipyate

Just as space that pervades everywhere and touches everything is not tainted by anything, the Lord likewise is pervading everywhere and in everyone, but is never tainted. (13.33)

Comments: This verse provides an example to illustrate the concept of the Lord not getting tainted by anyone's activities which was addressed in the previous verse. Space exists everywhere, in the minutest of objects and outside in the entire universe. However, it does not take on the attributes of those objects. Likewise, the Lord who resides in every being is not impacted by the attributes and activities of these beings. A similar example was employed previously in verse (9.6).

यथा प्रकाशयत्येकः कृत्स्नं लोकमिमं रविः ।
क्षेत्रं क्षेत्री तथा कृत्स्नं प्रकाशयति भारत ।। ३४ ।।

yathā prakāśayaty ekaḥ kṛtsnaṁ lokam imaṁ raviḥ
kṣetraṁ kṣetrī tathā kṛtsnaṁ prakāśayati bhārata

O Bharata! Just as a single Sun illuminates this entire world, the Lord who is omniscient illuminates the entire universe. (13.34)

Comments: This verse uses the example of the Sun to demonstrate the Lord's infinite energy and radiance. There is only one Sun that illuminates our entire world, and likewise there is only one Lord Almighty who illuminates, powers, and activates the entire universe and its inhabitants.

The Fivefold Difference

क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञयोरेवम् अन्तरं ज्ञानचक्षुषा ।
भूतप्रकृतिमोक्षं च ये विदुर्यान्ति ते परम् ॥ ३५ ॥
kṣetrakṣetrajñayor evam antaraṁ jñānacakṣuṣā
bhūtaprakṛtimokṣaṁ ca ye vidur yānti te param

One who can, through the eyes of knowledge, clearly understand the difference between the field of activity, the knower of the field of activity and the method to achieve liberation from nature's bondage, will surely attain the Lord's abode. (13.35)

Comments: The Lord concludes His teachings in this chapter by summarizing that one, who by following the methods in (13.8) to (13.12) is able to attain proper knowledge about the field of activity and the knower of activity, and the differences between them will indeed attain the Lord whose special attributes and differences from individual souls and inert objects were identified in various verses such as (13.32) to (13.34). This verse uses

the term *antaram* (difference) to indicate the difference between *kshetra* (living beings and nature) and the *kshetrajna* (the Lord Almighty).

The relationship between the three entities in the universe, namely individual souls, inert nature and the Lord Almighty described in this chapter can be viewed as an explanation for the concept of fivefold differences (*pancha bheda*) which is one of the foundational principles of the philosophy of Sri Madhwacharya. The fivefold differences among – (i) inert objects, (ii) among individual souls, (iii) between individual souls and inert objects, (iv) between the Lord and individual souls, and (v) between the Lord and inert objects. Verses (13.6) and (13.7) enumerated the different components of nature that impact an individual's personality. These indicated the differences among the inert components of nature. Verse (13.22) indicates that individual souls experience different types of births based on their interaction with the qualities of nature, and verse (13.31) refers to different living beings and hence they describe the difference that exists between individual souls. Verses (13.20) and (13.21) describe the impact of inert nature on living beings, highlighting the difference between individual souls and inert objects. Verse (13.19) indicated the difference between inert nature and the Lord Almighty and verse (13.34) clarified the difference between the individual soul and the Lord Almighty.

Summary of Chapter 13

As indicated in the introductory chapter, Sri Rayaru in [GV] has provided an excellent categorization of the 18 chapters in Gita by dividing them into 3 groups of 6

chapters each. The last six chapters (13 – 18) provide details on some of the important concepts covered in the previous chapters. In chapter 2, verses (2-12) onwards, the attributes of individual souls were described. In chapters 10, 11, 12 etc., the Lord's forms, attributes and greatness were discussed. In verse (7.4), the attributes of eightfold inert nature were discussed. Arjuna now wants to understand more about the interrelationships among the three entities – the Lord, individual souls, and inert nature. This chapter provides clarification on this topic and forms the philosophical basis for the principle of fivefold differences. In particular, in verse (13.1), Arjuna requests details on the following six topics – *prakruti* (inert nature) and *purusha* (individual soul), *kshetra* (field of activity) and *kshetrajna* (one who fully knows about *kshetra*), *jnana* (procedure to obtain knowledge) and *jneya* (the one who is to be known). In verses (13.2) to (13.7), the Lord provides details on *kshetra* and *kshetrajna* and verses (13.8) to (13.19) cover the topics of *jnana* and *jneya*. Verses (13.20) to (13.24) are related to *prakruti* and *purusha*. The remaining verses describe the interaction and interrelationships among these entities. The relationship between the three entities in the universe, namely the individual souls, inert nature and the Lord described in this chapter can be viewed as an explanation for the concept of fivefold differences (*pancha bheda*) which is one of the foundational principles of the philosophy of Sri Madhwacharya.

।। इति त्रयोदशोऽध्यायः ।।

End of Chapter 13

चतुर्दशोऽध्यायः – गुणत्रयविभागयोगः
Chapter 14 - Division of Qualities

Chapter Introduction: This chapter of 27 verses is termed *Gunatraya Vibhaga Yoga* (Division of Qualities). This chapter has details on the three qualities of nature (*sattv* – pious, *rajas* – passion, *tamas* – ignorance) which define one's personality. These concepts were introduced in chapter 3 (3.5) and are expanded here. The creation of the universe through sentient Mother Nature is described. The ways in which the three qualities bind a person are also explained. The method to escape from the clutches of the three qualities are described**.** The previous chapter had a discussion on the interactions between inert nature, the individual soul, and the Lord. Verse (13.22) indicated the impact of the three qualities of nature on living beings. Activities of living beings are influenced by the three qualities of nature and such activities entangle them. This chapter provides details on the three qualities of nature in terms of their origin, influence, impact and more importantly, the method to overcome them.

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
परं भूयः प्रवक्ष्यामि ज्ञानानां ज्ञानमुत्तमम् ।
यज्ज्ञात्वा मुनयः सर्वे परां सिद्धिमितो गताः ।। १ ।।
śrībhagavān uvāca
paraṁ bhūyaḥ pravakṣyāmi jñānānāṁ jñānam uttamam
yaj jñātvā munayaḥ sarve parāṁ siddhim ito gatāḥ

इदं ज्ञानमुपाश्रित्य मम साधर्म्यमागताः ।
सर्गेऽपि नोपजायन्ते प्रलये न व्यथन्ति च ।। २ ।।

idaṁ jñānam upāśritya mama sādharmyam āgatāḥ
sargepi nopajāyante pralaye na vyathanti ca

The Lord said:

O Arjuna! There is one more important principle which I will teach you now. Great sages have attained liberation by understanding this concept. (14.1)

One who realizes this knowledge will attain My abode and will not be reborn during the next cycle of creation. Also, they will not suffer during the next cycle of dissolution. (14.2)

Comments: For one to get freed from bondage and achieve liberation, it is important to understand the ways that one gets influenced by the three qualities of nature. The Lord had resolved to impart such knowledge to Arjuna in verse (2.39) and expanded on the concepts introduced in verse (3.5). In verse (14.1), the Lord states that seekers who understood this concept previously had attained liberation, and hence it is a proven path. In verse (14.2), the Lord states the rewards for ones who attain this knowledge during their spiritual journey. Such seekers will attain *moksha,* which is identified as the state where one does not suffer from worldly miseries that impact living beings who are subject to repeated births and deaths. In that sense, the state of *moksha* is identified as '*sadharmya*' (in an extremely limited sense, somewhat like the state of the Lord who is never subject to any miseries).

Origin of the Three Qualities

मम योनिर्महद्ब्रह्म तस्मिन् गर्भं दधाम्यहम् ।
सम्भवः सर्वभूतानां ततो भवति भारत ।। ३ ।।

mama yonir mahad brahma tasmin garbhaṁ dadhāmy aham
saṁbhavaḥ sarvabhūtānāṁ tato bhavati bhārata

सर्वयोनिषु कौन्तेय मूर्तयः सम्भवन्ति याः ।
तासां ब्रह्म महद्योनिरहं बीजप्रदः पिता ॥ ४ ॥
sarvayoniṣu kaunteya mūrtayaḥ saṁbhavanti yāḥ
tāsāṁ brahma mahad yonir ahaṁ bījapradaḥ pitā

O Bharata! Mother Nature (Goddess Mahalakshmi) is My consort, in whose womb I place the embryo, from which the process of creation of all beings starts. (14.3)

O Son of Kunti! For all living beings born in various species, Mother Nature is the mother and I am the father planting the seeds. (14.4)

Comments: In these two verses, the Lord describes the process of creation of living beings which is due to the interaction of the Lord with His consort, Goddess Mahalakshmi who is the governing deity for nature. This aspect was briefly described previously in verse (13.27). Inert nature and its components were previously identified in verse (7.4). Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies that the interaction described in this verse applies to every cycle of creation of the universe. Further, this applies to all categories of living beings such as deities (angels), humans, and demons.

Entanglement by the Three Qualities

सत्त्वं रजस्तम इति गुणाः प्रकृतिसम्भवाः ।
निबध्नन्ति महाबाहो देहे देहिनमव्ययम् ॥ ५ ॥

sattvaṁ rajas tama iti guṇāḥ prakṛtisambhavāḥ
nibadhnanti mahābāho dehe dehinam avyayam

O Arjuna, Mighty Armed One! The three attributes, namely virtue (*sattva*), passion (*rajas*) and ignorance (*tamas*) are born out of insentient nature. These attributes tightly bind individual souls which intrinsically do not perish (the governing deities for these three attributes are Sridevi, Bhoodevi and Durgadevi which are forms of Goddess Mahalakshmi). (14.5)

Comments: After describing the interaction between the Lord Almighty and His consort, Goddess Mahalakshmi in the previous verse, this verse outlines the process by which the three qualities of nature bind an individual soul. Goddess Mahalakshmi, in her three forms of Sri, Bhoo, and Durga governs the three qualities, namely virtue (*sattva*), passion (*rajas*) and ignorance (*tamas*), respectively. In general, all living creatures are entangled by these three qualities. Specifically, Goddess Sridevi binds deities (angels), Goddess Bhoodevi binds humans, and Goddess Durgadevi binds demons. Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies that souls who are in *moksha* after liberation are not entangled by these qualities. The binding applies only to beings who are not yet liberated. This is implied using the word *dehina* (those with physical bodies). Liberated souls do not have physical bodies.

तत्र सत्त्वं निर्मलत्वात् प्रकाशकमनामयम् ।
सुखसङ्गेन बध्नाति ज्ञानसङ्गेन चानघ ॥ ६ ॥

tatra sattvaṁ nirmalatvāt prakāśakam anāmayam
sukhasaṅgena badhnāti jñānasaṅgena cānagha

रजो रागात्मकं विद्धि तृष्णासङ्गसमुद्भवम् ।
तन्निबध्नाति कौन्तेय कर्मसङ्गेन देहिनम् ॥ ७ ॥
rajo rāgātmakaṁ viddhi tṛṣṇāsaṅgasamudbhavam
tan nibadhnāti kaunteya karmasaṅgena dehinam

तमस्त्वज्ञानजं विद्धि मोहनं सर्वदेहिनाम् ।
प्रमादालस्यनिद्राभिस्तन्निबध्नाति भारत ॥ ८ ॥
tamas tv ajñānajaṁ viddhi mohanaṁ sarvadehinām
pramādālasyanidrābhis tan nibadhnāti bhārata

O Anagha (Arjuna, One without sins)! The quality of *sattva* is pure and hence is ideal for acquiring spiritual knowledge. It removes defects and diseases. It helps connect one with pure knowledge and bliss. (14.6)

O Son of Kunti! The quality of *rajas* creates obsession and attachment. It causes the feelings of desire and expectations with respect to objects of sense pleasure. It binds one with passion (sensory pursuits). (14.7)

O Bharata! The quality of *tamas* is responsible for covering one with ignorance. It can create delusion in everyone. It is responsible for forgetfulness, lethargy, and excessive sleep. (14.8)

Comments: These three verses describe the impact of the entanglement of the three qualities (*sattva, rajas, tamas*) on deities, humans, and demons, respectively. It must be noted that even deities who are destined for liberation will be bound by the quality of *sattv* till they achieve divine, spiritual knowledge and attain liberation through the grace of the Lord.

Predominance of the Three Qualities

सत्त्वं सुखे संजयति रजः कर्मणि भारत ।
ज्ञानमावृत्य तु तमः प्रमादे संजयत्युत ।। ९ ।।
sattvaṁ sukhe saṁjayati rajaḥ karmaṇi bhārata
jñānam āvṛtya tu tamaḥ pramāde saṁjayaty uta

रजस्तमश्चाभिभूय सत्त्वं भवति भारत ।
रजः सत्त्वं तमश्चैव तमः सत्त्वं रजस्तथा ।। १० ।।
rajas tamaś cābhibhūya sattvaṁ bhavati bhārata
rajaḥ sattvaṁ tamaś caiva tamaḥ sattvaṁ rajas tathā

The quality of *sattva* leads one to joyful activities. *Rajas* leads one to endless sensory pursuits. *Tamas* leads one to ignorance, obscuring proper knowledge, and leads a person astray. (14.9)

O Bharata! When the proportion of *sattva* in an individual exceeds that of *rajas* and *tamas*, it then dominates over the other two. Similarly, *rajas* and *tamas* will dominate when they are in higher proportion. (14.10)

Comments: After entangling living beings as described in previous verses, the three qualities influence their character and hence their activities. While the three qualities themselves are inert entities, it is their respective governing deities which are responsible for influencing living beings. How do these three qualities influence one who one is entangled by all three of them? Verse (14.10) states the three qualities typically will not be present in equal proportions, and the one which is in higher proportion will have the predominant influence.

Impact of the Three Qualities

सर्वद्वारेषु देहेऽस्मिन् प्रकाश उपजायते ।
ज्ञानं यदा तदा विद्याद्विवृद्धं सत्त्वमित्युत ।। ११ ।।
sarvadvāreṣu dehesmin prakāśa upajāyate
jñānaṁ yadā tadā vidyād vivṛddhaṁ sattvam ity uta

लोभः प्रवृत्तिरारम्भः कर्मणाम् अशमः स्पृहा ।
रजस्येतानि जायन्ते विवृद्धे भरतर्षभ ।। १२ ।।
lobhaḥ pravṛttir ārambhaḥ karmaṇām aśamaḥ spṛhā
rajasy etāni jāyante vivṛddhe bharatarṣabha

अप्रकाशोऽप्रवृत्तिश्च प्रमादो मोह एव च ।
तमस्येतानि जायन्ते विवृद्धे कुरुनन्दन ।। १३ ।।
aprakāśopravṛttiś ca pramādo moha eva ca
tamasy etāni jāyante vivṛddhe kurunandana

Whenever the light of knowledge emanates from every part and every sense organ of a person, that person is said to have dominant *sattva* qualities. (14.11)

O Superior Among Bharatas! Greed, indulging in unnecessary activities, restlessness, insatiable desires are all traits of one with the dominant quality of *rajas*. (14.12)

O Scion of the Kuru Dynasty! Delusion, lethargy, laziness, forgetfulness, and ignorance are all visible in a person with a dominant *tamas* quality. (14.13)

Comments: These three verses describe the traits of individuals who are influenced by the respective dominant qualities of the three qualities of nature.

Result of the Three Qualities on Rebirth

यदा सत्त्वे प्रवृद्धे तु प्रलयं याति देहभृत् ।
तदोत्तमविदां लोकान् अमलान् प्रतिपद्यते ॥ १४ ॥
yadā sattve pravṛddhe tu pralayaṁ yāti dehabhṛt
tadottamavidāṁ lokān amalān pratipadyate

रजसि प्रलयं गत्वा कर्मसङ्गिषु जायते ।
तथा प्रलीनस्तमसि मूढयोनिषु जायते ॥ १५ ॥
rajasi pralayaṁ gatvā karmasaṅgiṣu jāyate
tathā pralīnas tamasi mūḍhayoniṣu jāyate

When one with dominant *sattva* qualities leaves this world, that person will eventually be reborn in a well-respected family, in an environment conducive to spiritual learning. (14.14)

When one with dominant *rajas* qualities leaves this world, rebirth will be in an environment of actions and pursuits in search of outcomes. One with dominant *tamas* qualities, after leaving this world, will be born in a demoniac environment. (14.15)

Comments: These verses describe the type of families in which an individual will be reborn, based on the activities performed, which are in turn influenced by the three qualities of nature.

कर्मणः सुकृतस्याहुः सात्त्विकं निर्मलं फलम् ।
रजसस्तु फलं दुःखमज्ञानं तमसः फलम् ॥ १६ ॥
karmaṇaḥ sukṛtasyāhuḥ sāttvikaṁ nirmalaṁ phalam
rajasas tu phalaṁ duḥkham ajñānaṁ tamasaḥ phalam

Actions performed with a dominant *sattva* quality lead to pure and pious outcomes. *Rajasic* activities lead to a mixture of happiness and distress. *Tamasic* activities lead to ignorance and darkness. (14.16)

Comments: This verse describes the resulting outcome of activities performed by living beings, based on their innate nature which is influenced by the three qualities.

सत्त्वात् संजायते ज्ञानं रजसो लोभ एव च ।
प्रमादमोहौ तमसो भवतोऽज्ञानमेव च ।। १७ ।।
sattvāt saṁjāyate jñānaṁ rajaso lobha eva ca
pramādamohau tamaso bhavatojñānam eva ca

The quality of *sattva* results in pure knowledge. *Rajas* creates aspiration for riches. *Tamas* creates forgetfulness and ignorance. (14.17)

Comments: In addition to the influence on attitudes and activities of individuals, the three qualities also impact their intellect. Those with dominant *sattvic* activities are drawn towards spiritual studies and acquire divine knowledge. Those with dominant *rajasic* qualities have their mind and intellect focused on acquiring worldly riches. Ones with dominant *tamasic* qualities indulge in sinful activities out of ignorance and false knowledge.

Qualities and Ultimate Destinations

ऊर्ध्वं गच्छन्ति सत्त्वस्था मध्ये तिष्ठन्ति राजसाः ।
जघन्यगुणवृत्तिस्था अधो गच्छन्ति तामसाः ।। १८ ।।
ūrdhvaṁ gacchanti sattvasthā madhye tiṣṭhanti rājasāḥ
jaghanyaguṇavṛttisthā adho gacchhanti tāmasāḥ

Those with *sattvic* qualities eventually reach the higher, divine worlds. Those indulging in *rajasic* activities will reach temporary heavenly worlds, only to be reborn in this world. *Tamasic* activities lead to downfall into lower worlds such as hell. (14.18)

Comments: The three qualities lead living beings to three different types of awareness and knowledge which cause them to indulge in differing activities. These actions eventually lead them to three different destinations.

The Lord is Beyond the Three Qualities

नान्यं गुणेभ्यः कर्तारं यदा द्रष्टाऽनुपश्यति ।
गुणेभ्यश्च परं वेत्ति मद्भावं सोऽधिगच्छति ।। १९ ।।

nānyaṁ guṇebhyaḥ kartāraṁ yadā draṣṭānupaśyati
guṇebhyaś ca paraṁ vetti madbhāvaṁ sodhigacchhati

One who realizes that all activities are influenced only by a combination of these three qualities born out of insentient nature, and that the independent Lord Almighty is beyond these attributes, will attain My abode. (14.19)

Comments: In verse (3.5), it was stated that living beings perform activities based on the influence of the qualities of nature. In this chapter, the origin, influence, and impact of the three qualities of nature on living beings were described in detail. This verse clarifies that these qualities themselves are not supreme, and that the Lord is their controller. The Lord is beyond these three qualities and they act under His control and supervision. This verse also clarifies the difference (*bheda*) between the Lord Almighty and inert nature represented by the three qualities.

गुणान् एतान् अतीत्य त्रीन् देही देहसमुद्भवान् ।
जन्ममृत्युजरादुःखैर्विमुक्तोऽमृतमश्नुते ॥ २० ॥
guṇān etān atītya trīn dehī dehasamudbhavān
janmamṛtyujarāduḥkhair vimuktomṛtam aśnute

One who can reach beyond the three qualities created by nature will be able to overcome birth, death, old age, and misery, and achieve liberation. (14.20)

Comments: After having described the influence and impact of the three qualities of nature, the Lord says that one should strive to avoid getting entangled by them. This will help one achieve liberation.

The quality of *sattv* (piety) is pure and influences one to pursue spiritual studies which enables one to traverse the right path. Why then should one try to reach beyond even the quality of *sattv*? Sri Vidyamanya Teertha in [GPM] clarifies that some who attain spiritual knowledge can develop arrogance and pride due to their achievements. One should avoid getting trapped in arrogance and pride.

Methods to Overcome the Three Qualities

अर्जुन उवाच ।
कैर्लिङ्गैस्त्रीन् गुणान् एतान् अतीतो भवति प्रभो ।
किमाचारः कथं चैतांस्त्रीन् गुणानतिवर्तते ॥ २१ ॥
arjuna uvāca
kair liṅgais trīn guṇān etān atīto bhavati prabho
kimācāraḥ kathaṁ caitāṁs trīn guṇān ativartate

Arjuna said:

O Prabhu! What are the traits of people who have crossed these three qualities? How do they act? How are they able to cross the three qualities? (14.21)

Comments: After listening to the Lord's sermon on the origin, influence and impact of the three qualities of nature on living beings and the need for one to reach beyond these qualities (verse 14.20), Arjuna is naturally curious to learn about the abilities and attributes of such seekers. Arjuna had previously asked a similar question about the abilities of those with mental equanimity (*stita prajna*) in (2.54).

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

प्रकाशं च प्रवृत्तिं च मोहमेव च पाण्डव ।

न द्वेष्टि संप्रवृत्तानि न निवृत्तानि काङ्क्षति ।। २२ ।।

śrībhagavān uvāca
prakāśaṁ ca pravṛttiṁ ca moham eva ca pāṇḍava
na dveṣṭi saṁpravṛttāni na nivṛttāni kāṅkṣati

The Lord said:

O Son of Pandu! One who has transcended the three qualities of nature (*gunas*) neither abhors the light of knowledge, activity, and delusion when they occur, nor craves for them when they cease.

Or

On worldly issues, such people do not despise knowledge (due to *sattva*), activity (due to *rajas)* or ignorance (due to *tamas*). But on the issue of the Lord's attributes, they crave for knowledge (due to *sattv*) and activity (due to *rajas*) and abhor delusion (due to *tamas*). (14.22)

Comments: The Lord responds to Arjuna's questions about the traits of those who overcome the influence of the three qualities in the following four verses (14.22) to (14.25). Many of the abilities and attributes stated here have been previously described in verses (2.55) to (2.59), (5.18) to (5.20), (6.7) to (6.9), (12.13) to (12.30), (13.8) to (13.12) etc., while enumerating the characteristics of seekers who are on the right spiritual path. The abilities and attributes described in these verses must be viewed in the context of one's relationship with the three qualities of nature. Sri Rayaru in [GV] provides the inner meanings of these verses based on Sri Madhwacharya's [GB] and [GTN].

The three qualities of nature exist in two modes – gross and subtle. The gross aspect of the three qualities of *sattv*, *rajas* and *tamas* leads one to indulge in the respective pursuits of spiritual knowledge, sensory pleasure and harmful lethargy. The subtle aspects of these three qualities result in one displaying keen interest (due to *sattv*), some interest (due to *rajas*), and disdain (due to *tamas*) respectively in learning about the Lord's auspicious attributes. One who has conquered the three qualities of nature does not treat with contempt the outcomes of activities related to worldly matters. However, with regard to learning about the Lord's attributes, such a person desires the impact of subtle aspects of *sattv* and *rajas* and abhors the impact of *tamas*.

Sri Rayaru in [GV] provides another meaning for this verse: One who has conquered the three qualities of nature does not envy those who have attained divine, spiritual knowledge due to *sattv* and also does not wish for the return of lost ignorant knowledge.

उदासीनवदासीनो गुणैर्यो न विचाल्यते ।
गुणा वर्तन्त इत्येव योऽवतिष्ठति नेङ्गते ॥ २३ ॥
udāsīnavad āsīno guṇair yo na vicālyate
guṇā vartanta ity eva yovatiṣṭhati neṅgate

समदुःखसुखः स्वस्थः समलोष्टाश्मकाञ्चनः ।
तुल्यप्रियाप्रियो धीरस्तुल्यनिन्दात्मसंस्तुतिः ॥ २४ ॥
samaduḥkhasukhaḥ svasthaḥ samaloṣṭāśmakāñcanaḥ
tulyapriyāpriyo dhīras tulyanindātmasaṁstutiḥ

मानापमानयोस्तुल्यस्तुल्यो मित्रारिपक्षयोः ।
सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी गुणातीतः स उच्यते ॥ २५ ॥
mānāpamānayos tulyas tulyo mitrāripakṣayoḥ
sarvārambhaparityāgī guṇātītaḥ sa ucyate

They appear to be detached towards most activities even while indulging in prescribed activities undertaken only to please The Lord. They are convinced that natural qualities act as per the wishes of the Lord and cannot act independently. They do not indulge in useless pursuits. (14.23)

They treat worldly happiness and distress with equanimity. They look at a piece of gold and a lump of mud the same way. Pleasant and the unpleasant, praise and insult, are the same to them. (14.24)

For such people, honour and dishonour, friends and foes, are the same. They do not indulge in any worthless activities and focus only on those activities that please the Lord. They are the ones who have crossed the three qualities. (14.25)

Comments: After having described the attributes of those who have crossed the three qualities of nature, the Lord describes their attitudes in performance of activities that please Him. They appear dispassionate and indifferent in performing any activity, but quietly perform activities that please Lord Vishnu. (The word *udaseenavat* mean 'appear indifferent' due to the use of the qualifier *vat*). They will not stop *vaishnavic* activities even if they ever come under the influence of the three qualities, as they are aware that these qualities do not act independently but are under the control of the Lord.

These devotees do not stop propitiating the Lord if they do not see any worldly gains. Similarly, they do not stop engaging in activities dear to the Lord even if some in society consider those activities as unnecessary or undesirable. They are also not impacted by the views of their friends or foes in matters related to propitiating the Lord. In other words, they are steadfast in their devotion to the Lord.

Rewards for Overcoming the Qualities of Nature

मां च योऽव्यभिचारेण भक्तियोगेन सेवते ।
स गुणान् समतीत्यैतान् ब्रह्मभूयाय कल्पते ।। २६ ।।
māṁ ca yovyabhicāreṇa bhaktiyogena sevate
sa guṇān samatītyaitān brahmabhūyāya kalpate

One who worships Me with pure, unalloyed devotion will indeed be able to reach beyond the three qualities and attain the abode of Mother Nature - Goddess Mahalakshmi (which is also My abode). (14.26)

Comments: The previous verses describe the characteristics of one who can reach beyond the three qualities of nature. How can a seeker attain such superior characteristics? The Lord states that unalloyed devotion to Him is the surest way for one to reach this state. Such a seeker will be freed from the bondage imposed by sentient nature and will reach the abode of Goddess Mahalakshmi who is the governing deity for nature. As Goddess Mahalakshmi entangles one with the three qualities of nature, one must first please her to get liberated from bondage. As indicated previously (verse 12.6), one must always propitiate Goddess Lakshmi together with her consort, the Lord Almighty.

Sri Madinur Vishnu Teertha in his [BGS] has identified this verse as a summary of this entire chapter. This verse makes a reference to the three qualities of nature which bind a living being, and also states that pure devotion to the Lord is the way to overcome such entanglement. Hence, it is indeed apt to consider this verse as a summary of this entire chapter.

ब्रह्मणो हि प्रतिष्ठाऽहम् अमृतस्याव्ययस्य च ।
शाश्वतस्य च धर्मस्य सुखस्यैकान्तिकस्य च ।। २७ ।।

brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāham amṛtasyāvyayasya ca
śāśvatasya ca dharmasya sukhasyaikāntikasya ca

I am the refuge for eternal sentient nature (Goddess Mahalakshmi) and for liberated souls. It is well known (from scriptures) that I am the abode for eternal righteousness (*dharma*) and pure bliss (*moksha*). (14.27)

Comments: The previous verse states that a devotee who has crossed the three qualities of nature, will reach

the abode of Goddess Mahalakshmi, which is also the abode of the Lord. A seeker who is on the spiritual path will first reach the abode of Goddess Lakshmi and with Her grace will be liberated in the abode of Lord Almighty. This is the state where the liberated souls will experience unending, uncorrupted bliss.

Summary of Chapter 14

As indicated in the introductory section, the third set of chapters (from Chapter 13 to 18), provide more details on specific concepts discussed in the earlier sets of chapters. The previous chapter had a discussion on the interaction between inert nature, the individual soul, and the Lord, and indicated the impact of the three qualities of nature, namely *sattv* (piety), *rajas* (passion), and *tamas* (ignorance) on living beings. Activities of living beings are influenced by the three qualities of nature and such activities entangle them. For one to get freed from bondage and achieve liberation, it is important to understand the ways that one gets influenced by the three qualities of nature. This chapter provides details on the three qualities of nature in terms of their origin (verses 14.3-14.4), entanglement (verses 14.5 –14.8), impact and result (verses 14.11-14.18). Verse (14.19) clarifies that the Lord Almighty controls and is beyond the three qualities of nature. The Lord also states in (14.21) that a seeker should strive to traverse beyond these three qualities to achieve liberation. In verses (14.22) to (14.27), the Lord enumerates the traits of those who escape entanglement by these three qualities and eventually reach His abode.

।। इति चतुर्दशोऽध्यायः ।।
End of Chapter 14

पञ्चदशोऽध्यायः – पुरुषोत्तमयोगः
Chapter 15 – Theology of The Supreme Being

Chapter Introduction: This chapter of 20 verses is known as *Purushottama Yoga* (Theology of The Supreme Being). This chapter is principally concerned with the establishment of the principle of the Lord Almighty's supremacy and hence is termed *Purushottama Yoga* where *uttama* means Supreme and *purusha* means Being. This chapter is considered by many to have the core teachings of the entire **Gita**. The **Gita** has 700 verses spread over 18 chapters. Chapter 15 which has 20 verses, interestingly has 700 letters (15 verses have 32 letters each and the remaining 5 verses have 44 letters each)! This gives credence to the argument of this chapter's importance based on numerology. While the Lord had previously described the components of the universe such as living beings, inert objects, and the Lord, in this chapter He illustrates the interrelations among them using the example of a banyan tree. The Lord had indicated His presence in living beings previously, especially within their hearts in verses (9.4), (10.20), and (13.18). This chapter provides more details on the aspects of His presence in living beings. Further, in a previous chapter (13.24), it was stated that a seeker who understands the relationship between the Lord (*purusha*) and nature will eventually achieve liberation. This chapter provides more details on the attributes of the Lord (*purusha*). In verse 15, the Lord explicitly states His presence in everyone and declares that He is the primary subject matter of the **Vedas**. In verses 16 to 20, the Lord emphatically describes Himself as the Supreme Being, different from all other beings,

thereby convincingly establishing the philosophy of dualism (*dvaita*) which was popularized by Sri Madhwacharya and other seers in his lineage such as Sri Jaya Teertha and Sri Raghavendra Teertha.

The Tree of the Universe

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
ऊर्ध्वमूलमधःशाखम् अश्वत्थं प्राहुरव्ययम् ।
छन्दांसि यस्य पर्णानि यस्तं वेद स वेदवित् ॥ १ ॥
śrībhagavān uvāca
ūrdhvamūlam adhaḥśākham aśvatthaṁ prāhur avyayam
chandāṁsi yasya parṇāni yas taṁ veda sa vedavit

The Lord said:

The eternal banyan tree of the Universe is characterized by the following - The Lord is like the earth that supports the tree, Mother nature is the root of the tree. The 8 principles of nature are the branches of the tree. The tree is eternally transforming like a running stream. The **Vedas** are the leaves of this tree. One who knows these, knows the **Vedas**.

Comments: This enigmatic verse describes the universe using the example of a banyan tree. One must carefully analyze each word to understand the inner meanings in this verse. Sri Rayaru in his [GV] based on Sri Madhwacharya's [GB] and [GTN] provides an excellent interpretation for this verse using the word derivation approach of Sanskrit.

Firstly, the word '*oordhwa*' is derived from '*uttamatvaat*' and means 'one that is superior'. Further, in the **Vedas**,

Lord Vishnu is described as '*oordhwa*', hence it refers to Lord Almighty Vishnu. Thus, Lord Vishnu is the foundational component for the tree and hence represents the earth that supports the tree. Sentient nature and its three qualities are governed by the Lord's consort Mahalakshmi who is superior to all other entities in the universe and hence represents the three roots of this Tree of the Universe. The word '*adha*' means inferior and represents the 8 principles of nature (the 5 elements of physical nature and the principles of *mahat* - consciousness, *ahankara* - individuation, and *buddhi* - intellect). These 8 principles and their governing deities are like the branches of this Tree of the Universe. The tree is termed *ashwattha* (continuously transforming) and *avyaya* (eternal). The word '*ashwattha*' can be derived in two ways. (i) *a* + *shwa* + *ttha*, where *shwa* means 'tomorrow' *a* + *shwa* means 'not tomorrow'. Hence this word means that the state of the tree tomorrow is not the same as it is today, which implies that the Universe is continuously transforming. This is compared to a stream of running water, where water is eternally running as a stream, but the content of water at any place at any time is not the same as it is in a previous instant. (ii) *ashwattha* is derived from the word '*ashwa*' which means 'horse'. A horse is constantly in motion and does not stay still. Similarly, the universe is continuously in motion. It should also be noted that previously in chapter 10 (10.26), the Lord had stated that among all trees, He has a special presence in '*ashwattha*' (the banyan tree). The **Vedas** are like leaves of this tree. Just as the leaves bloom and give rise to flowers and fruits, seekers who learn the **Vedas** will earn the fruits such as worldly riches and ultimately, *moksha* (the Lord's abode).

अधश्चोर्ध्वं प्रसृतास्तस्य शाखा

गुणप्रवृद्धा विषयप्रवालाः ।

अधश्च मूलान्यनुसन्ततानि

कर्मानुबन्धीनि मनुष्यलोके ॥ २ ॥

adhaś cordhvaṁ prasṛtāstasya śākhā guṇapravṛddhā viṣayapravālāḥ
adhaś ca mūlāny anusaṁtatāni karmānubandhīni manuṣyaloke

The branches of this Tree of the Universe are nourished by the three qualities of nature and extend both above and below. The sprouts represent the objects of sensory perception. The roots represent the Lord, sentient nature, and inert nature. Nature along with its three qualities of *sattv*, *rajas*, and *tamas* entangles living beings. Just like the roots of a tree are responsible for the fruits grown, the rewards based on actions in this world are due to the Lord, sentient nature and the three qualities represented by the roots. (15.2)

Comments: This verse continues the description of the Tree of the Universe and is even more enigmatic than the previous verse. In the previous chapter (14.5), it was stated that Goddess Mahalakshmi in her three forms of Sri, Bhoo, and Durga controls the '*gunas*', the three qualities of nature (*sattv, rajas, tamas*). This verse states that the five basic elements of nature and the three principles represented by the branches of this tree are influenced by the three qualities of nature (*gunas*). Hence, the roots which represent sentient and inert nature are superior to the branches which represent the elements of nature and the three principles (*mahat, ahankara, buddhi*).

The three qualities of nature (*sattv, rajas, tamas*) are like new roots. The three principles and the five basic elements of nature present in a living being are responsible for the objects of sensory perception which are pursued by living beings. This was described previously in verses (14.11) – (14.13). These objects of sensory pursuits are represented by the sprouts which emanate from the branches of the tree. The sprouts have temporary existence just like the experience of sensory pleasures by living beings.

Sri Rayaru in [GV] states that the above interpretation of the components of the Tree of the Universe is based on the description in the *Bhallava* branch of the **Vedas** which states that the Lord who supports the Tree of the Universe is not part of the tree but is distinct from it. The components of the banyan tree (and their governing deities) in these two verses can now be summarized as follows:

* Earth (supporting the tree) = The Lord Almighty
* Roots = Sentient and inert nature
* New roots = The three qualities of nature
* Branches = The five basic elements of nature, and the three principles
* Sub-branches = Physical bodies of living beings
* Leaves = The **Vedas**
* Flowers, Fruit = Worldly desires, Liberation

These two verses appear to illustrate the concepts of gradations among various deities described previously in (3.42) with the help of a Banyan tree.

न रूपमस्येह तथोपलभ्यते
नान्तो न चादिर्न च सम्प्रतिष्ठा ।
अश्वत्थमेनं सुविरूढमूलम्
असङ्गशस्त्रेण दृढेन छित्वा ।। ३ ।।

na rūpam asyeha tathopalabhyate nānto na cādir na ca saṁpratiṣṭhā
aśvattham enaṁ suvirūḍhamūlaṁ asaṅgaśastreṇa dṛḍhena chittvā

This tree is constantly evolving (like a flowing stream) and does not stagnate; hence cannot be seen. It has neither beginning nor end. One should chop this tree with the sharp weapon of firm detachment (as the tree has very strong roots), so as to separate the hidden roots from other parts of the tree (one should use the strong weapon of devotion and detachment to understand the distinction between the Lord, Nature and the individual souls). (15.3)

Comments: After having described the structure of the Tree of the Universe in previous verses, this verse states the action that a seeker needs to take to progress on the spiritual path. The tree is constantly evolving as new sprouts, leaves, flowers, and fruits bloom and the old ones wither. However, the earth and the strong roots do not wither. Similarly, the entities in the universe such as living beings and inert objects are constantly changing but the Lord and Mother Nature who are represented by the strong, foundational roots of this tree, are not subject to any change and do not perish. This verse clarifies that the Lord who pervades all and is invisible during the beginning and end of the universe (during the time epoch *kalpa*) continues to

be invisible during its lifetime. These concepts were previously stated in (9.7) and (9.10). To completely understand the Lord's greatness, a seeker must chop this tree with a strong, sharp weapon to be able to separate the tree from its foundation and understand its roots. That sharp weapon is described as *asanga* = *a* + *sanga*. This word can be interpreted in two ways – (i) *asanga* = detachment (as *sanga* means attachment) which implies that one should detach oneself from worldly matters, and (ii) *asanga* = involvement in activities pleasing to the Lord, as the letter *a* represents the Lord. This concept is clarified by Sri Prabhanjanacharya in [GM].

ततः परं तत्परिमार्गितव्यं
यस्मिन् गता न निवर्तन्ति भूयः ।
तमेव चाद्यं पुरुषं प्रपद्ये
यतः प्रवृत्तिः प्रसृता पुराणी ॥ ४ ॥

tataḥ padaṁ tatparimārgitavyaṁ yasmin gatā na nivartanti bhūyaḥ
tameva cādyaṁ puruṣaṁ prapadye yataḥ pravṛttiḥ prasṛtā purāṇī

Then one should learn more about the Lord through spiritual studies. Those who attain the Lord never return to this world. One should surrender to the Lord Almighty who is the root cause of this universe and all its activities. (15.4)

Comments: In the previous verse it was stated that a seeker should chop the Tree of the Universe with the weapon of detachment and knowledge. This verse describes the procedure to chop the tree. A seeker should learn about the Lord through the process of studies,

contemplation, and analysis of scriptures to develop conviction in divine knowledge. Only when one is aware of the distinction between the Lord and other entities in the universe, will one be able to develop firm conviction in divine knowledge. One should surrender to the Lord to escape from the cycle of births and deaths. Only then will one eventually attain the Lord's abode never to return to this world.

निर्मानमोहा जितसङ्गदोषा
अध्यात्मनित्या विनिवृत्तकामाः ।
द्वन्द्वैर्विमुक्ताः सुखदुःखसंज्ञै–
र्गच्छन्त्यमूढाः पदमव्ययं तत् ॥ ५ ॥

nirmānamohā jitasaṅgadoṣā adhyātmanityā vinivṛttakāmāḥ dvandvair vimuktāḥ sukhaduḥkhasaṁjñaiḥ gacchhanty amūḍhāḥ padam avyayaṁ tat

One who has overcome pride, ignorance, and worldly pleasures, and who is involved in spiritual pursuits, who performs duties with no expectations, and who treats happiness and distress with equanimity, will indeed reach the destination of eternal bliss. (15.5)

Comments: The previous verses stated that a seeker needs to develop detachment in worldly affairs to imbibe divine knowledge. This verse identifies additional characteristics which enables such a seeker to reach the Lord's abode.

The Lord's Presence in Entities

न तद्भासयते सूर्यो न शशांको न पावकः ।
यद्गत्वा न निवर्तन्ते तद्धाम परमं मम ॥ ६ ॥

na tad bhāsayate sūryo na śaśāṅko na pāvakaḥ
yad gatvā na nivartante tad dhāma paramaṁ mama

That destination is illuminated neither by the Sun nor by the Moon nor by fire. One who reaches this destination will never return to this world. That destination is My abode. (15.6)

Comments: The Lord describes the characteristics of His abode. The world that we live in is illuminated by the Sun (during daytime), the Moon (during nighttime), and by fire. The Lord's abode is vastly different. The Lord is self-illuminating, and He does not need any external entities to illuminate His abode.

ममैवांशो जीवलोके जीवभूतः सनातनः ।
मनःषष्ठानीन्द्रियाणि प्रकृतिस्थानि कर्षति ।। ७ ।।

mamaivāṁśo jīvaloke jīvabhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ
manaḥṣaṣṭhānīndriyāṇi prakṛtisthāni karṣati

The eternal individual soul inside the physical body of beings is like an infinitesimal fraction of Me (similar in being eternal but distinctly separate in attributes and capabilities). The individual soul directs the six sense organs (including the mind) towards objects of pleasure, propelled by the qualities of nature. (15.7)

Comments: It was stated previously (verse 5.14) that living beings cannot act on their own and their activities are propelled and stimulated by the Lord. This verse states that an infinitesimal fraction of the Lord is present inside the physical bodies of individual souls. This concept was described earlier in verses (9.4), (10.20), (13.18) etc. This fraction of the Lord is similar to the individual soul as

both are eternal in nature, but this fraction of the Lord is vastly different and superior to all individual souls. This concept is described later in verses (15.16) – (15.20). Sri Rayaru in [GV] based on Sri Madhwacharya's [GB] states that a fraction or *amsha* of the Lord is of two types – (i) *bhinna amsha* (fraction that is different) and (ii) *swaroopa amsha* (intrinsic fraction, as in the case of the Lord's various incarnations). The fraction of the Lord present in living beings is similar to the individual soul in the sense that a firefly is similar to the Sun, as both are illuminating objects but are vastly different in attributes and capabilities.

शरीरं यदवाप्नोति यच्चाप्युत्क्रामतीश्वरः ।
गृहीत्वैतानि संयाति वायुर्गन्धानिवाशयात् ॥ ८ ॥
śarīraṁ yad avāpnoti yac cāpy utkrāmatīśvaraḥ
gṛhitvaitāni saṁyāti vāyur gandhān ivāśayāt

At the time a soul enters a body and also at the time it leaves, the Lord carries the sense organs (in a subtle form) into and out of the body, just like a gentle, blowing wind carries the fragrance of flowers. (15.8)

Comments: Does an individual soul by itself direct attention towards objects of sense pleasure? This verse is a continuation of the previous verse and states that it is the Lord Almighty resident in living beings who causes pursuit of sense pleasures. The Lord is always present in living beings. When a soul leaves the physical body, the Lord causes the sense organs of perception to travel along with the soul. Sense organs here refer to their subtle form and not the gross organs that one can see in a physical body. The process of the subtle sense organs carried along with a departing soul out of a physical body is compared

to a gently blowing wind that carries the fragrance of a flower. No one can see the fragrance being carried by the wind, but one can smell the fragrance. The flower does not lose its fragrance even though the wind carried a part of it. In the **Brahma Sutra** (3-1-4), it is stated that when a soul leaves the body and the body is consumed by the elements of nature (such as fire), the sense organs also get consumed. How can this be reconciled with the statement that the Lord carries the sense organs along with the soul? Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies by stating that the Lord carries the subtle sense organs (a fraction of the physical sense organs) as per this verse and the **Brahma Sutra** is referring to the gross sense organs.

श्रोत्रं चक्षुः स्पर्शनं च रसनं घ्राणमेव च ।
अधिष्ठाय मनश्चायं विषयानुपसेवते ॥ ९ ॥
śrotraṁ cakṣuḥ sparśanaṁ ca rasanaṁ ghrāṇam eva ca
adhiṣṭhāya manaś cāyaṁ viṣayān upasevate

The Lord resides in the sense organs: ears, eyes, skin, tongue, nose, and mind, and verily consumes the (righteous) objects of sense pursuits. (15.9)

Comments: It was stated previously in (9.4), (10.20), (13.18) etc., that the Lord resides within the hearts of living beings, stimulating all their activities. In (11.33), the Lord declares to Arjuna that He has already killed Arjuna's enemies and that Arjuna is only an instrument, thereby confirming that it is the Lord who performs all activities. Further, it was stated in (9.24) that the Lord is the consumer of the fruits of all activities. While earlier verses in this chapter such as (15.1), (15.2) described the structure of the Tree of the Universe, in this verse the

Lord who is resident in every living being declares that He is the consumer of the objects of sense pursuits. It is clarified in the next verse that the Lord consumes only the righteous/healthy fruits of activities.

This verse is identified by Sri Madinur Vishnu Teertha in his [BGS] as representing the core concepts of this chapter. This verse establishes the relationship between the Lord Almighty, the individual souls, and inert objects (sense organs of all living beings). It also establishes the supremacy of the Lord (*Purushottama Yoga*), His doership of activities and consumption of righteous fruits of such activities, thereby establishing the independence of the Lord, and the dependency of individual souls and inert objects. While the sense organs of perception are identified here, they are governed by deities whose order of gradation was identified previously in (3.42). Given the breadth of principles covered in this verse, it is apt to recognize this as the core verse for this chapter.

उत्क्रामन्तं स्थितं वाऽपि भुंजानं वा गुणान्वितम् ।
विमूढा नानुपश्यन्ति पश्यन्ति ज्ञानचक्षुषः ॥ १० ॥

utkrāmantaṁ sthitaṁ vāpi bhuñjānaṁ vā guṇānvitam
vimūḍhā nānupaśyanti paśyanti jñānacakṣuṣaḥ

Fools will not understand the Lord leaving or entering the physical body or consuming righteous fruits from sensory objects. Only learned ones with the eyes of knowledge perceive these concepts. (15.10)

Comments: Living beings experience both happiness and sadness from indulgence in objects of sense pursuits. Since the Lord is the ultimate consumer of fruits of sense pursuits, does He also experience happiness and sadness?

This verse states that the Lord only consumes righteous/ healthy fruits from objects of sense perception as clarified with the use of the qualifier '*guṇānvitam'*.

यतन्तो योगिनश्चैनं पश्यन्त्यात्मन्यवस्थितम् ।
यतन्तोऽप्यकृतात्मानो नैनं पश्यन्त्यचेतसः ।। ११ ।।
yatanto yoginaś cainaṁ paśyanty ātmany avasthitam
yatantopy akṛtātmāno nainaṁ paśyanty acetasaḥ

Enlightened seekers, through their consistent, concentrated efforts can visualize the Lord Almighty residing within them. Fools and unwise ones will never be able to visualize Him. (15.11)

Comments: Seekers who perform prescribed activities with austerity and self-control can realize the presence of the Lord resident in them. They are also convinced that it is the Lord who powers and propels all their activities and they can visualize the Lord's presence.

The Lord's Strength and Greatness

यदादित्यगतं तेजो जगद् भासयतेऽखिलम् ।
यच्चन्द्रमसि यच्चाग्नौ तत्तेजो विद्धि मामकम् ।। १२।।
yad ādityagataṁ tejo jagad bhāsayatekhilam
yac candramasi yac cāgnau tat tejo viddhi māmakam

Know that the energy that powers the Sun, the Moon and the fire which illuminate this universe, is indeed Mine. (15.12)

Comments: The next four verses describe the Lord's presence in specific entities. The Sun provides light and energy to the entire world. However, the Sun is only one

among millions of stars and all of them are powered by the Lord. Sri Rayaru in [GV] quotes the **Brahma Sutra** (1.3.22) and **Katha Upanishad** (2.5.15) which state that the light and energy in the Sun and the Moon are due to the Lord. It is interesting to note the example of 3 objects, namely, the Sun, the Moon, and fire in this verse. The Sun as a star is an intrinsic source of light and energy. The Moon does not emanate light on its own but reflects the light of the Sun. Fire in materials such as wood and charcoal is not visible, but when one lights them, they emanate energy. So, these three entities cover objects whose light and energy are seen and entities whose light and energy are unseen.

गामाविश्य च भूतानि धारयाम्यहमोजसा ।
पुष्णामि चौषधीः सर्वाः सोमो भूत्वा रसात्मकः ।। १३ ।।
gām āviśya ca bhūtāni dhārayāmy aham ojasā
pușṇāmi causadhīḥ sarvāḥ somo bhūtvā rasātmakaḥ

I enter this earth and through My strength support all living beings. I also reside in the Moon in the form of nectar to nourish plant life on earth. (15.13)

Comments: It is well known that plant life on earth depends on the Moon for nourishment. This verse states that it is due to the presence of the Lord that the Moon has this special ability.

अहं वैश्वानरो भूत्वा प्राणिनां देहमाश्रितः ।
प्राणापानसमायुक्तः पचाम्यन्नं चतुर्विधम् ।। १४ ।।
ahaṁ vaiśvānaro bhūtvā prāṇināṁ deham āśritaḥ
prāṇāpānasamāyuktaḥ pacāmy annaṁ caturvidham

I reside in the bodies of living beings in the form of Vaishwanara, and along with the incoming and outgoing breaths, I consume and digest the four types of food. (15.14)

Comments: As stated in verse (15.9), the Lord resides in, and powers the activities of all living beings. This verse describes the process of digesting food powered by the Lord Almighty. Living beings consume four types of food: food that is masticated and then swallowed, food that is swallowed directly, food that is licked, and food in liquid form that is drunk. Every food article that one consumes belongs to one of these categories. The Lord, in the name of Vaishwanara resides in living beings in the form of *jatara agni* (abdominal fire). Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies that the deity Mukhya Prana in the forms of *prana* and *apana*, powered by the Lord, helps in the process of food consumption and digestion which includes distribution of energy in food to various parts of the body.

The Supreme Lord Almighty and the Principle of Dualism

सर्वस्य चाहं हृदि संनिविष्टो

मत्तः स्मृतिर्ज्ञानमपोहनं च ।

वेदैश्च सर्वैरहमेव वेद्यो

वेदान्तकृद् वेदविदेव चाहम् ॥ १५ ॥

sarvasya cāhaṁ hṛdi saṁniviṣṭo mattaḥ smṛtir jñānam apohanaṁ ca
vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyo vedāntakṛd vedavid eva cāham

I reside in the hearts of all living beings. I am responsible for memory, knowledge, and any loss of knowledge. I am the primary purport of the **Vedas**. I am the author of Vedanta. I am the only one who knows all the **Vedas**. (15.15)

Comments: This is one of the most important verses in the **Gita** as it summarizes many of the key teachings related to the attributes and greatness of the Lord. In this verse, the Lord emphatically declares that He is resident in all living beings (within their hearts) and causes them to attain knowledge and lose knowledge. The **Vedas** are scriptural texts that are vocally passed on from one generation to the next. They are not authored by anyone, human or divine. Various passages in the **Vedas** superficially appear to propitiate deities such as Agni (fire), Varuna (water) etc. The Lord clarifies here that the **Vedas** primarily describe Him alone (and describe other deities secondarily). The Lord does not state that He is the author of the **Vedas**, but states that He is the author of Vedanta. Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies that Vedanta means *vedanaamanto nirnayo* (the definitive summary of the **Vedas**), in other words, the **Brahma Sutras**. This is consistent with the historical fact that the **Brahma Sutras** were composed by Lord Vedavyasa, who is another form of the Lord. Sri Rayaru in [GV] also quotes the **Bhagavata** (11.21.42), where Lord Krishna teaches Uddhava that He alone knows the **Vedas** fully.

द्वाविमौ पुरषौ लोके क्षरश्चाक्षर एव च ।
क्षरः सर्वाणि भूतानि कूटस्थोऽक्षर उच्यते ॥ १६ ॥

dvāv imau puruṣau loke kṣaraś cākṣara eva ca
kṣaraḥ sarvāṇi bhūtāni kūṭasthokṣara ucyate

There are two types of dependent souls in the Universe, *kshara* and *akshara*. Those individual souls with perishable bodies are known as *kshara* and Goddess Mahalakshmi, the ever liberated and the one without a perishable body is *akshara*. (15.16)

Comments: After having described the Lord's omnipresence, omniscience, infinite strength etc., in previous verses, the next 5 verses categorically describe the supremacy of the Lord. This verse identifies two types of dependent individual souls. Living beings are described as *kshara* as they have perishable physical bodies. Even liberated souls have had perishable bodies previously. The one without a perishable body (*akshara*) is termed *kootastha* which means space (which is eternal). This was stated previously in (2.17). The only dependent, sentient entity in the universe which is eternal and has no perishable body is the Lord's consort Mahalakshmi. Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies that the masculine form *akshara* to describe Goddess Mahalakshmi is an acceptable usage based on Lakshmi's strength that exceeds that of male deities. This is as per Sri Madhwacharya's commentary on the **Chandogya Upanishat (3.15)**.

उत्तमः पुरुषस्त्वन्यः परमात्मेत्युदाहृतः ।
यो लोकत्रयमाविश्य बिभर्त्यव्यय ईश्वरः ॥ १७ ॥

uttamaḥ puruṣastvanyaḥ paramātmety udāhṛtaḥ
yo lokatrayam āviśya bibharty avyaya īśvaraḥ

There is another entity different from and superior to both the *kshara* and the *akshara*. That eternal, imperishable entity which pervades all three worlds and supports and

nourishes them is known as *Paramatma* (The Supreme Among Beings). (15.17)

Comments: After having described the two dependent, sentient entities in the universe, namely *kshara* and *akshara*, the Lord declares that there is another entity which is distinct from and superior to both. Sri Vadiraja Teertha in his [BGL] states that the word '*tu*' which precedes the word '*anya*' (different) indicates that this other entity is quite different from the other two. This entity pervades all three worlds and provides support and nourishment. Even though the three worlds suffer destruction (at the time of the Great Dissolution), the supreme entity continues its existence as indicated with the words '*avyaya*' and '*īśvaraḥ*'. Hence it is logical to describe this supreme entity as *Paramatma* (the supreme among all souls). Sri Rayaru in [GV] quotes the **Shweta Upanishat** (6.13) to support the concepts in this verse.

यस्मात्क्षरमतीतोऽहमक्षरादपि चोत्तमः ।
अतोऽस्मि लोके वेदे च प्रथितः पुरुषोत्तमः ॥ १८॥
yasmāt kṣaram atītoham akṣarād api cottamaḥ
atosmi loke vede ca prathitaḥ puruṣottamaḥ

I (Krishna) am superior to *ksharas* (individual souls) and to even *akshara* (Goddess Mahalakshmi) and hence am known as Purushottama (The Supreme One) of all the worlds and am described as such in the scriptures. (15.18)

Comments: Is the Supreme Soul described in previous verse different from Krishna? The Lord answers by confirming that He indeed is the Supreme Soul. This fact is supported by '*loka*', scriptures that are composed, and the '***Vedas***' which are revealed.

The use of the word '*api*' in *akṣarād api* (meaning - even *akshara*) when referring to the Lord's supremacy over Goddess Mahalakshmi (*akshara*) is interesting. While one can generally understand the Lord's superiority over all individual souls, this verse states that He is superior to even Goddess Lakshmidevi (who is worshipped as the mother of this universe). This is to further emphasize the principle of the Supreme Being.

यो मामेवमसंमूढो जानाति पुरुषोत्तमम् ।
स सर्वविद्भजति मां सर्वभावेन भारत ।। १९ ।।

yo mām evam asaṁmūḍho jānāti puruṣottamam
sa sarvavid bhajati māṁ sarvabhāvena bhārata

O Bharata! One who considers Me as 'The Supreme One' without any doubt indeed knows Me. Hence that person knows everything and constantly worships Me in all ways. (15.19)

Comments: How does a seeker act after learning about the principle of the Supreme Soul? Such a seeker will not fall under the wrong impression that the distinction between the Lord and individual souls is only transactional (*vyavaharika*) and not spiritual (*paramarthika*) (as per Sri Vadiraja Teertha's [BGL]). Based on the evidence in the scriptures, such a seeker would develop deep conviction in the concept of duality (difference among supreme soul and the individual souls) and would propitiate the Lord through all means (vocal, mental, physical).

इति गुह्यतमं शास्त्रम् इदमुक्तं मयाऽनघ ।
एतद् बुद्ध्वा बुद्धिमान् स्यात् कृतकृत्यश्च भारत ।। २० ।।

iti guhyatamaṁ śāstram idam uktaṁ mayānagha
etat buddhvā buddhimān syāt kṛtakṛtyaś ca bhārata

O Anagha (Arjuna, the one without sins)! I have taught you the most confidential spiritual principles. O Bharata! One who knows this is deemed to have acquired the ultimate spiritual knowledge (*aparoksha jnana*) and will be liberated. (15.20)

Comments: This chapter started with a couple of enigmatic verses describing the structure of the Tree of the Universe and ended with a clear, unambiguous characterization of the principle of duality. One who clearly understands these confidential principles will attain direct, divine (*aparoksha*) knowledge and will achieve eternal bliss.

These last 5 verses (15.16) – (15.20) unambiguously establish the relationship between the Lord Almighty, individual souls, and the inert universe with the clear conclusion that the Lord Almighty is supreme among and different from all individual souls and inert objects. The term *Purushottama* (the supreme personality) is described in these verses and forms the basis for the title of this wonderful chapter - 'Purushottama Yoga'. Sri Madhwacharya quotes these 5 verses extensively in his works such as **Vishnu Tattva Vinirnaya, Mayavada Khandana, Sadachara Smriti** in addition to his two commentaries on the **Gita**.

Summary of Chapter 15

This chapter of 20 verses and 700 letters is considered by many to be the most important chapter in the entire

Gita, the one that summarizes all its 700 verses. This chapter is principally concerned with the establishment of the principle of the Lord Almighty's superiority and hence is termed *Purushottama Yoga* where *uttama* means supreme and *purusha* means the Being. The relationship between the inert universe, individual souls and the Lord Almighty were previously discussed. In this chapter, these fivefold differences are explained with the example of a banyan tree. Verses (15.1) and (15.2) describe the structure of the tree. This description is enigmatic, and one can appreciate the explanation provided by Sri Rayaru in [GV] to help understand the real meaning of these verses. The correspondence between the components of the tree and the entities in the universe are as follows: Earth (supporting the tree) = The Lord Almighty; Roots = Sentient and inert nature; New roots = The three qualities of nature; Branches = The five basic elements of nature; Sub-branches = Physical bodies of living beings; Leaves = The **Vedas**; Flowers, Fruit = Worldly desires, Liberation. Using the analogy of a banyan tree, these two verses appear to illustrate the concepts of gradations among various deities described previously in (3.42). Verses (15.3) – (15.5) describe the manner in which a seeker needs to approach the concepts in the Tree of the Universe to understand the nature of the Lord. Verses (15.6) to (15.14) describe some specific attributes of the Lord such as omnipresence and omniscience. Verse (15.15) is one of the most famous verses in the **Gita** in which the Lord emphatically declares His presence in the hearts of all living beings and states that He is knowable through the **Vedas**. Verses (15.16) to (15.20) establish the relationship between the Lord

Almighty, individual souls, and the inert universe with the clear conclusion that the Lord Almighty is supreme among and different from all individual souls and inert objects. These verses are distinguished by their clarity and simplicity, which is different from the enigmatic nature of the initial few verses. The term *Purushottama* (the supreme personality) is described in these verses and forms the basis for the title of this wonderful chapter - '*Purushottama Yoga*'.

।। इति पञ्चदशोऽध्यायः ।।

End of Chapter 15

षोढशोऽध्यायः – दैवासुरसम्पद्विभागयोगः
Chapter 16 –
The Divine and the Demoniac Nature

Chapter Introduction: This chapter of 24 verses is known as *Daivasura Sampat Vibhaga Yoga* (Division of the Divine and the Demoniac). This chapter delves deep into types of human nature. In previous chapters, there were many references to pious, virtuous people with divine natures and to people with demoniac natures. This chapter provides more details on human traits. These traits are intrinsic to an individual. One cannot judge people based on external appearance, position in society etc. In the previous chapter, verse (15.5) described the methods to achieve divine, spiritual knowledge and liberation. Verse (15.11) described those who can achieve self-realization and those who cannot. These are the characteristics of divine and demoniac natures, respectively. Some of these characteristics were described in verses (9.11) to (9.14) also. This chapter provides more details on the divine and demoniac characteristics which help a seeker to inculcate divine attributes and avoid association with demoniac ones. Hence this chapter is a logical extension to the previous chapter.

Divine Attributes and Conduct

श्रीभगवानुवाच।

अभयं सत्त्वसंशुद्धिर्ज्ञानयोगव्यवस्थितिः ।

दानं दमश्च यज्ञश्च स्वाध्यायस्तप आर्जवम् ।। १ ।।

śrībhagavān uvāca
abhayaṁ sattvasaṁśuddhir jñānayogavyavasthitiḥ
dānaṁ damaś ca yajñaś ca svādhyāyas tapa ārjavam

अहिंसा सत्यमक्रोधस्त्यागः शान्तिरपैशुनम् ।
दया भूतेष्वलोलुत्वं मार्दवं ह्रीरचापलम् ॥ २ ॥
ahiṁsā satyam akrodhas tyāgaḥ śāntir apaiśunam
dayā bhūteṣv aloluptvaṁ mārdavaṁ hrīr acāpalam

तेजः क्षमा धृतिः शौचम् अद्रोहो नातिमानिता ।
भवन्ति सम्पदं दैवीम् अभिजातस्य भारत ॥ ३ ॥
tejaḥ kṣamā dhṛtiḥ śaucam adroho nātimānitā
bhavanti saṁpadaṁ daivīm abhijātasya bhārata

The Lord Said:

Fearlessness, purity in mind, conviction in the path of divine knowledge, charitable nature, self-restraint, involvement in sacrificial activities, pursuance of Vedic study, austerity, uprightness. (16.1)

Non-violent, truthful, devoid of anger, benevolent, faithful (to the Lord Almighty), averse to fault finding, compassionate, devoid of avarice, gentle, modest, determined (to do good deeds). (16.2)

Valour, patience, fortitude, purity (physical and mental), absence of malice and ego. O Bharata! These attributes are observed in those with divine nature. (16.3)

Comments: The Lord identifies 26 divine characteristics in these 3 verses. Fearlessness refers to one who is not only fearless, but also does not cause fear in others. This was indicated earlier in (12.15) as the characteristic of one

who is dear to the Lord. Sri Rayaru in [GV] states that one who is desirous of liberation must inculcate these characteristics.

Demoniac Attributes

दम्भो दर्पोऽभिमानश्च क्रोधः पारुष्यमेव च ।
अज्ञानं चाभिजातस्य पार्थ सम्पदमासुरीम् ॥ ४ ॥
dambho darpobhimānaś ca krodhaḥ pāruṣyam eva ca
ajñānaṁ cābhijātasya pārtha saṁpadam āsurīm

O Partha! The natural attributes of those with demoniac natures are: arrogance, pretentious pride, conceit, anger, harshness, and ignorance. (16.4)

Comments: The Lord now identifies some of the characteristics of those with demoniac natures. More details on demoniac natures and conduct are detailed in verses (16.7) to (16.18).

Resultant Destinations

दैवी सम्पद्विमोक्षाय निबन्धायासुरी मता ।
मा शुचः सम्पदं दैवीम् अभिजातोऽसि पाण्डव ॥ ५ ॥
daivī saṁpad vimokṣāya nibandhāyāsurī matā
mā śucaḥ saṁpadaṁ daivīm abhijātosi pāṇḍava

O Son of Pandu! Divine nature paves the way for levels of liberation while demoniac nature pushes one to downfall. Do not despair. You possess divine nature. (16.5)

Comments: After identifying the 26 characteristics of those with divine nature, the Lord comforts Arjuna stating that he does not need to despair as he is of divine nature.

Arjuna is an incarnation of the deity Indra and has innate angelic characteristics.

Sri Rayaru in [GV] draws attention to the use of the word *vimokṣā* while referring to liberation. *vimokṣā* is derived as *vividha* + *mokṣā*, meaning different levels of bliss in liberation based on the innate abilities (*yogyata*) and efforts (*sadhana*) of souls.

Sri Madinur Vishnu Teertha in his [BGS] has identified this verse as representing the core concepts in chapter 16. Given that this chapter is about divine and the demoniac character and the fact that this verse identifies the ultimate destination of the divine and demoniac, it is apt to consider this as the core verse. In addition, in this verse the Lord also reiterates the divine nature of Arjuna.

द्वौ भूतसर्गौ लोकेऽस्मिन् दैव आसुर एव च ।
दैवो विस्तरशः प्रोक्त आसुरं पार्थ मे शृणु ।। ६ ।।
dvau bhūtasargau lokesmin daiva āsura eva ca
daivo vistaraśaḥ prokta āsuraṁ pārtha me śṛṇu

O Partha! Divine and demoniac are the two natural attributes of living beings. The attributes of divine nature were explained in detail. Now listen to the attributes of demoniac nature. (16.6)

Comments: There are multifaceted personalities in this world. Previously in chapter 9 (verses 9.11 – 9.14), characteristics of different types of people were described. So, how can there be only two characteristics – divine and demoniac? Sri Rayaru states in [GV] that the discussion in this chapter concerns those with significantly higher proportions of divine and demoniac characteristics.

Demoniac Nature and Conduct

प्रवृत्तिं च निवृत्तिं च जना न विदुरासुराः ।
न शौचं नापि चाचारो न सत्यं तेषु विद्यते ॥ ७ ॥
pravṛttiṁ ca nivṛttiṁ ca janā na vidur āsurāḥ
na śaucaṁ nāpi cācāro na satyaṁ teṣu vidyate

Those with demoniac natures do not have knowledge about performing prescribed activities and about avoiding prohibited activities. They are impure in mind and body. They do not have good conduct and are not truthful. (16.7)

Comments: Verse (16.4) identified few major characteristics of demoniac nature. The following 12 verses (16.7 to 16.18) have a detailed description of demoniac nature and resultant conduct.

The Lord uses the word '*na*' thrice in the second line to indicate the absence of each of the three characteristics (namely purity, right conduct, and truthfulness) in demoniac nature instead of grouping them together. Sri Rayaru in [GV] explains that the reason for individually indicating their absence is to convey the extent of complete absence of each of these three attributes.

असत्यमप्रतिष्ठं ते जगदाहुरनीश्वरम् ।
अपरस्परसम्भूतं किमन्यत्कामहैतुकम् ॥ ८ ॥
asatyam apratiṣṭhaṁ te jagad āhur anīśvaram
aparasparasaṁbhūtaṁ kim anyat kāmahaitukam

They say that the world is unreal and is not dependent on the Lord Almighty. They do not believe in the Supreme entity controlling the universe. They do not believe in the

orderly creation of the universe, which they say is a result of lustful co-existence. (16.8)

Comments: Sri Rayaru in [GV] provides two interpretations for the first line of this verse:

1. The words *satya*, *pratishta*, and *īśvara* all refer to the Lord Almighty who is responsible for the creation and the dissolution, the sustenance, and the regulation of the universe (respectively signified by these three names). Those with demoniac natures do not believe in the supreme entity with the above attributes (signified by the prefix '*a*' for the above three terms).

2. Those with demoniac natures believe that the universe is unreal, has no creator, and has no controller.

It must be noted that their nonbelief in the orderly creation of the entities in the universe is inconsistent with the cyclic order of creation described by the Lord in verse (3.14).

<u>Author's Note</u> : The idea that the world is real has been widely discussed in Hindu philosophical circles [OPM]. One school of thought holds the position that the world is neither real not unreal. It's proponents use an oft quoted example of a sea shell and a piece of silver to make the point. Our Acharyas have pointed out the sheer futility of the argument which is based on totally convoluted and irrational thinking. That the world is real is a position seminal to the philosophy of Sri Madhwacharya, and The **Bhagvad Gita** itself supports this in its every verse.

एतां दृष्टिमवष्टभ्य नष्टात्मानोऽल्पबुद्धयः ।
प्रभवन्त्युग्रकर्माणः क्षयाय जगतोऽहिताः ॥ ९ ॥
etāṁ dṛṣṭim avaṣṭabhya naṣṭātmānolpabuddhayaḥ
prabhavanty ugrakarmāṇaḥ kṣayāya jagatohitāḥ

काममाश्रित्य दुष्पूरं दम्भमानमदान्विताः ।
मोहाद् गृहीत्वाऽसद्ग्राहान् प्रवर्तन्तेऽशुचिव्रताः ॥ १० ॥
kāmam āśritya duṣpūraṁ dambhamānamadānvitāḥ
mohād gṛhītvāsadgrāhān pravartanteśucivratāḥ

चिन्तामपरिमेयां च प्रलयान्तामुपाश्रिताः ।
कामोपभोगपरमा एतावदिति निश्चिताः ॥ ११ ॥
cintām aparimeyāṁ ca pralayāntām upāśritāḥ
kāmopabhogaparamā etāvad iti niścitāḥ

आशापाशशतैर्बद्धाः कामक्रोधपरायणाः ।
ईहन्ते कामभोगार्थम् अन्यायेनार्थसञ्चयान् ॥ १२ ॥
āśāpāśaśatair baddhāḥ kāmakrodhaparāyaṇāḥ
īhante kāmabhogārtham anyāyenārthasaṁcayān

Ignorant people with such viewpoints corrupt their minds themselves; they indulge in risky activities and are born to cause destruction of societies. (16.9)

Addicted to insatiable desire, covered with vanity and conceit, they justify their actions based on misinterpretations of scriptures and indulge in pursuit of temporary, worldly pleasures. (16.10)

Such people, immersed in dangerous activities, endlessly pursue gratification of the senses which they

consider to be the goal of life. They are convinced that there is no life beyond this world. (16.11)

Imprisoned by multitudes of unfulfilled desires, overcome by lust and anger, they indulge in illegal and unethical means to earn wealth, primarily for physical pleasures. (16.12)

Comments: These four verses describe the actions of those with demoniac natures and the excuses they provide to justify their actions. They do not just act out of impulse, but rather use the basis of misinterpreted scriptures to justify their actions. Verse (16.12) identifies the passions of *kama* (lust) and *krodha* (anger) as the root cause for immoral activities. This was also indicated previously in verse (3.37).

Attitudes of the Demoniac Natured

इदमद्य मया लब्धम् इमं प्राप्स्ये मनोरथम् ।
इदमस्तीदमपि मे भविष्यति पुनर्धनम् ॥ १३ ॥
idam adya mayā labdham imaṁ prāpsye manoratham
idam astīdam api me bhaviṣyati punar dhanam

असौ मया हतः शत्रुर्हनिष्ये चापरानपि ।
ईश्वरोऽहमहं भोगी सिद्धोऽहं बलवान् सुखी ॥ १४ ॥
asau mayā hataḥ śatruḥ haniṣye ca aparān api
īśvaraḥ.aham aham bhogī siddhaḥ ahaṁ balavān sukhī

आढ्योऽभिजनवानस्मि कोऽन्योऽस्ति सदृशो मया ।
यक्ष्ये दास्यामि मोदिष्य इत्यज्ञानविमोहिताः ॥ १५।
āḍhyobhijanavān asmi konyosti sadṛśo mayā
yakṣye dāsyāmi modiṣya ity ajñānavimohitāḥ

Those with demoniac natures proclaim as follows: I earned this wealth. I will satisfy all my desires. I will continue to gather more wealth. I will destroy my current opponents and emerging ones. I am the Lord. I have achieved everything. I am strong. I am born in a rich and famous family. There is no one equal to me. I will perform ritual sacrifices. I will donate to charity. I will enjoy myself. Such is their extreme arrogance and ignorance. (16.13) (16.14) (16.15)

Comments: These three verses describe the attitudes of those with demoniac natures. These have been identified previously by the Lord as the attributes that a seeker should avoid. The Lord had proclaimed in many verses ((5.14), (5.15), (15.9)) that no one can act on their own and all actions are due to Him. Yet, those with demoniac nature claim ownership of their successes and achievements. In verse (2.18), the Lord clarified that no one could kill someone else (as the soul is indestructible and even the destruction of the physical body is only due to the Lord alone). Yet those with demoniac natures claim that they alone destroy their opponents. In (6.41), it was stated that one's future births are based on one's past sincere efforts. Yet, those with demoniac natures boast about their family and lineage. They also make inconsistent claims. While they claim that they are indeed the Lord Himself, they also claim that they perform ritual sacrifices. If they are the Lord themselves, who do they propitiate in their ritual sacrifices? Their ritual and outwardly religious activities are a sham show to project a favourable image of themselves to society.

Destructive Pursuits of the Demoniac Natured

अनेकचित्तविभ्रान्ता मोहजालसमावृताः ।

प्रसक्ताः कामभोगेषु पतन्ति नरकेऽशुचौ ॥ १६ ॥

anekacittavibhrāntā mohajālasamāvṛtāḥ
prasaktāḥ kāmabhogeṣu patanti narakeśucau

आत्मसम्भाविताः स्तब्धा धनमानमदान्विताः ।

यजन्ते नामयज्ञैस्ते दम्भेनाविधिपूर्वकम् ॥ १७ ॥

ātmasaṁbhāvitāḥ stabdhā dhanamānamadānvitāḥ
yajante nāmayajñais te dambhenāvidhipūrvakam

अहंकारं बलं दर्पं कामं क्रोधं च संश्रिताः ।

मामात्मपरदेहेषु प्रद्विषन्तोऽभ्यसूयकाः ॥ १८ ॥

ahaṁkāraṁ balaṁ darpaṁ kāmaṁ krodhaṁ ca saṁśritāḥ
mām ātmaparadeheṣu pradviṣantobhyasūyakāḥ

Enveloped by delusion, such people get entangled in endless, distressful pursuits. Imprisoned by ignorance, they get addicted to self-destructive sense gratification and fall into abominable hell. (16.16)

Such people are complacent about themselves, are deluded by vanity, and are arrogant due to their wealth and success. They perform religious rituals without proper procedures in order to show off. (16.17)

They exhibit ego, arrogance, selfishness, lust, and short temper. They insult Me (Krishna), who is resident in them and in all others, purely out of jealousy. (16.18)

Comments: These verses continue the description of demoniac nature. In verse (16.17), it is stated that they are

complacent about themselves. This trait is seen in some, who, under the garb of charity donate money for some cause and expect publicity for societal acceptance and recognition. They claim that they perform activities independently and challenge the Lord to make them perform specific activities that they are not interested in.

Destinations for Demoniac Conduct

तानहं द्विषतः क्रूरान् संसारेषु नराधमान् ।
क्षिपाम्यजस्रमशुभान् आसुरीष्वेव योनिषु ॥ १९ ॥
tān ahaṁ dviṣataḥ krurān saṁsāreṣu narādhamān
kṣipāmy ajasram aśubhān āsurīṣv eva yoniṣu

आसुरीं योनिमापन्ना मूढा जन्मनि जन्मनि ।
मामप्राप्यैव कौन्तेय ततो यान्त्यधमां गतिम् ॥ २० ॥
āsurīṁ yonim āpannā mūḍhā janmanijanmani
mām aprāpyaiva kaunteya tato yānty adhamāṁ gatim

Such cruel, hateful, low lives have hatred towards the Lord. I will banish them into distressful, endless cycles of worldly afflictions or into demoniac births. (16.19)

O Son of Kunti! Such people with demoniac natures experience repeated births in demoniac environments and will end up in eternal hell with no way of reaching My abode. (16.20)

Comments: In these verses, the Lord indicates the eventual destination for those with demoniac natures and actions. Such people harbour hatred towards the Lord and consider that their only purpose of life is physical enjoyment at any cost.

Catalysts for Demoniac Actions

त्रिविधं नरकस्येदं द्वारं नाशनमात्मनः ।

कामः क्रोधस्तथा लोभस्तस्मादेतत् त्रयं त्यजेत् ।। २१ ।।

trividhaṁ narakasyedaṁ dvāraṁ nāśanam ātmanaḥ
kāmaḥ krodhas tathā lobhas tasmād etat trayaṁ tyajet

Lust, anger, and greed are the three gates to hell and self-destruction. One should get rid of these three harmful characteristics. (16.21)

Comments: In this verse the Lord identifies the main human passions that propel one towards harmful activities leading to self destruction. These are lust, anger, and greed. Lust is the never-ending desire for physical gratification. Previously in verse (3.37), the Lord stated the negative impacts of *kama* (lust) and *krodha* (anger). In verse (1.38), Arjuna himself had stated that the Kauravas were blinded by their greed (*lobha*) for a share of a kingdom which did not belong to them. This greed eventually destroyed the Kauravas. Anger occurs when one is not able to fulfil one's desires. Greed is the emotion that causes one to accumulate excess wealth at any cost for fulfilling unending desires. These three emotions are identified as the doors to hell as they stimulate destructive behaviour leading to unrecoverable downfall.

Method to Overcome Demoniac Tendencies

एतैर्विमुक्तः कौन्तेय तमोद्वारैस्त्रिभिर्नरः ।

आचरत्यात्मनः श्रेयस्ततो याति परां गतिम् ।। २२ ।।

etair vimuktaḥ kaunteya tamodvārais tribhir naraḥ
ācaraty ātmanaḥ śreyas tato yāti parāṁ gatim

यः शास्त्रविधिमुत्सृज्य वर्तते कामकारतः ।
न स सिद्धिमवाप्नोति न सुखं न परां गतिम् ।। २३ ।।
yaḥ śāstravidhim utsṛjya vartate kāmakārataḥ
na sa siddhim avāpnoti na sukhaṁ na parāṁ gatim

तस्माच्छास्त्रं प्रमाणं ते कार्याकार्यव्यवस्थितौ ।
ज्ञात्वा शास्त्रविधानोक्तं कर्म कर्तुमिहार्हसि ।। २४ ।।
tasmāc chāstraṁ pramāṇaṁ te kāryākāryavyavasthitau
jñātvā śāstravidhānoktaṁ karma kartum ihārhasi

O Son of Kunti! A seeker, who is free from these three dreadful afflictions is redeemed and will be on the way to attaining the Lord's abode. (16.22)

One who acts contravening the conduct prescribed in the scriptures will neither achieve enduring glory nor lasting happiness and will never reach the Lord's abode. (16.23)

Scriptures are your guide in performing right deeds and avoiding wrong ones. Therefore, perform your prescribed duties as per scriptural injunctions. (16.24)

Comments: After having described the three main emotions that cause one to indulge in harmful activities, the next three verses describe the method for one to get freed from the clutches of these emotions. The Lord states that one should resort to scriptures which act as guidelights for seekers on the journey of life. Scriptures such as the **Upanishads**, the **Bhagavata**, the **Ramayana** and of course, the **Mahabharata** contain many episodes to help a seeker to discriminate between moral and immoral actions, especially where there are grey areas.

Summary of Chapter 16

Some of the characteristics of the divine and the demoniac were described in verses (9.11) to (9.14) and other verses to help a seeker inculcate divine characteristics and avoid association with demoniac characters. This chapter provides more details on these characteristics. People with divine natures typically exhibit the following traits: honesty, straightforwardness, compassion, gentleness, sense control, peace of mind, pleasing personality, helpfulness, anger control, purity in body and mind, charitable nature etc. Those with demoniac natures are characterized by some of these traits: arrogance, anger, obstinacy, attachment to worldly pleasures, disrespect towards teachers and elders, conceit, cruelty, hypocricy etc. In verses (16.1) to (16.3), the Lord describes 26 attributes that characterize those endowed with divinity. Verses (16.7) to (16.18) have a detailed description of demoniac natures and its resultant conduct. The destination for those with demoniac conduct (which is a result of their demoniac nature) is described in verses (16.19) to (16.21). Verses (16.22) to (16.23) describe the methods for one to overcome demoniac tendencies. This chapter concludes in verse 16.24 with Lord Krishna declaring that one needs to resort to the scriptures to discriminate between right and wrong actions.

।। इति षोढशोऽध्यायः ।।

End of Chapter 16

सप्तदशोऽध्यायः – श्रद्धात्रयविभागयोगः
Chapter 17 - The Threefold Faith

Chapter Introduction: This chapter of 28 verses is termed *Shraddhatraya Vibhaga Yoga* (The Threefold Faith). In previous chapters, especially in chapter 14, the nature of individuals influenced by the qualities of *sattv, rajas, tamas* was stated in many places. This chapter has more details on the concept of threefold faith. In chapter 14, verse (14.19), it was stated that all activities are influenced by the combination of the three qualities of inert nature and that the Lord Almighty is beyond these attributes and hence is not influenced by them. Everyone has faith or belief about the purpose of life. This belief is born out of their innate nature. In this chapter, more details on the impact of the innate qualities of living beings are described, especially on issues such as faith, food habits, austerity, and charitable giving. While chapter 14 dealt with the impact of the three qualities of nature on living beings, this chapter deals with the three types of faith that are intrinsic to all living beings.

The Threefold Faith

अर्जुन उवाच ।

ये शास्त्रविधिमुत्सृज्य यजन्ते श्रद्धयाऽन्विताः ।

तेषां निष्ठा तु का कृष्ण सत्त्वमाहो रजस्तमः ।। १ ।।

arjuna uvāca
ye śāstravidhim utsṛjya yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ
teṣāṁ niṣṭhā tu kā kṛṣṇa sattvam āho rajas tamaḥ

Arjuna said:

O Krishna! Some worship and perform sacrifices with sincerity, but without knowing scriptural procedures. What is their conviction? Is it *sattvic* (virtuous), *rajasic* (passion) or *tamasic* (ignorance)? (17.1)

Comments: In the last verse of the previous chapter (16.24), the Lord stated that the scriptures are the guidelights for a seeker to discriminate between right and wrong deeds. Arjuna wants to know about those who do not know about scriptural procedures. If they perform deeds with sincerity, would they be *sattvic*, *rajasic* or *tamasic*?

Outwardly, the phrase *śāstravidhim utsṛjya* seems to refer to those who ignore the procedures indicated in the scriptures. Sri Rayaru in [GV] based on Sri Madhwacharya's [GB] states that this phrase refers to those who do not have knowledge about scriptural procedures. After all, not everyone has access to the scriptures, yet they also perform meditation, charity etc., based on their belief system. The question that Arjuna is asking is about the nature of their activities. This will be clear based in Lord's response in the next two verses.

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
त्रिविधा भवति श्रद्धा देहिनां सा स्वभावजा ।
सात्त्विकी राजसी चैव तामसी चेति तां श्रृणु ॥ २॥

śrībhagavān uvāca
trividhā bhavati śraddhā dehināṁ sā svabhāvajā
sāttvikī rājasī caiva tāmasī ceti tāṁ śṛṇu

The Lord said:

Living beings are predisposed (based on their innate nature) into one of three qualities - *sattvic*, *rajasic* or *tamasic*. Listen to their description. (17.2)

Comments: Every soul has an intrinsic nature that defines its predisposition. The Lord describes such predisposition.

सत्त्वानुरूपा सर्वस्य श्रद्धा भवति भारत ।
श्रद्धामयोऽयं पुरुषो यो यच्छ्रद्धः स एव सः ॥ ३ ॥
sattvānurūpā sarvasya śraddhā bhavati bhārata
śraddhāmayoyaṁ puruṣo yo yacchraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ

O Bharata! Everyone's faith is conditioned according to the innate nature of their soul. Everyone has some faith and that faith defines one's personality. (17.3)

Comments: Intrinsic predisposition in living beings defines their faith. It is this faith that is the basis of one's attitudes, personality, and activities. When one is liberated, one's state will be based on one's intrinsic predisposition (*sattvic, rajasic*, or *tamasic)*. Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies that despite one's intrinsic predisposition, one may exhibit other characteristics to a small extent based on the impact of one's environment. Intrinsic predisposition in souls is like the feature of magnetism in magnets which naturally attracts iron but no other metals. Magnetism in that sense is an intrinsic quality that cannot be separated from a magnet.

Sri Madinur Vishnu Teertha in his [BGS] has identified this verse as representing the core concepts in this chapter as it identifies the root cause that determines one's faith.

Types of Ritual Propitiation

यजन्ते सात्त्विका देवान् यक्षरक्षांसि राजसाः ।
प्रेतान् भूतगणांश्चान्ये यजन्ते तामसा जनाः ॥ ४ ॥
yajante sāttvikā devān yakṣarakṣāṁsi rājasāḥ
pretān bhūtagaṇāñś cānye yajante tāmasā janāḥ

अशास्त्रविहितं घोरं तप्यन्ते ये तपो जनाः ।
दम्भाहंकारसंयुक्ताः कामरागबलान्विताः ॥ ५ ॥
aśāstravihitaṁ ghoraṁ tapyante ye tapo janāḥ
dambhāhaṁkārasaṁyuktāḥ kāmarāgabalānvitāḥ

कर्शयन्तः शरीरस्थं भूतग्राममचेतसः ।
मां चैवान्तःशरीरस्थं तान् विद्ध्यासुरनिश्चयान् ॥ ६ ॥
karṣayantaḥ śarīrasthaṁ bhūtagrāmam acetasaḥ
māṁ caivāntaḥśarīrasthaṁ tān viddhy āsuraniścayān

Sattvic individuals worship godly deities. *Rajasic* individuals' worship *yakshas* (capricious spirits) and demonic forces. And *tamasic* forces worship evil spirits. (17.4)

Some people with arrogance and pride, driven by lust and desire, perform rigorous rituals not approved by the scriptures, ignoring the five basic elements of nature (and their governing deities), Mother Nature (Goddess Mahalakshmi), as well as Myself (Krishna), all resident in their bodies. They are of demoniac nature. (17.5) (17.6)

Comments: The types of spirits worshipped by *sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic* beings are identified in these verses. When the *sattvic* propitiate deities such as Brahma, Indra etc., due to their faith in Lord Almighty Vishnu, they envision the indwelling Lord Vishnu in these deities, and hence will attain His abode (*moksha*). Others such as *rajasas* who propitiate these deities without considering the indwelling Lord are propitiating other capricious spirits with the same name as Brahma, Indra etc. They will only experience temporary rewards in a heaven like abode. This is clarified by Sri Rayaru in [GV].

Habits of Food, Rituals, Austerity and Charity

आहारस्त्वपि सर्वस्य त्रिविधो भवति प्रियः ।
यज्ञस्तपस्तथा दानं तेषां भेदमिमं शृणु ।। ७ ।।
āhāras tv api sarvasya trividho bhavati priyaḥ
yajñas tapas tathā dānaṁ teṣāṁ bhedam imaṁ śṛṇu

Food preferred by living beings are also of three types. Likewise are sacrificial rituals, austerity, and charitable activities. Listen to their classification. (17.7)

Comments: The innate nature of living beings impacts their lives in terms of food habits, performance of daily rituals, and even their attitude and approach towards charitable giving. These are explained in detail in verses (17.8) to (17.22).

As per the **Chandogya Upanishat (6.5.1)**, food items have three components – gross, middle part and subtle part. The gross part is normally excreted, the middle part gives nourishment to the body and the subtle part impacts the mind. Hence, the type of food consumed not only impacts one's physical health, but also has an impact on one's mental health.

Types of Food Habits

आयुःसत्त्वबलारोग्यसुखप्रीतिविवर्धनाः ।
रस्याः स्निग्धाः स्थिरा हृद्या आहाराः सात्त्विकप्रियाः ।। ८ ।।
āyuḥsattvabalārogyasukhaprītivivardhanāḥ
rasyāḥ snigdhāḥ sthirā hṛdyā āhārāḥ sāttvikapriyāḥ

Sattvic (virtuous) people like food items that are pleasant, nourishing, sweet, tasty, and are easy to digest.

They enhance longevity, vitality and health, and induce happiness and good nature. (17.8)

Comments: ‘You are what you eat’ is a famous saying which indicates that one’s nature is defined by one’s food habits. Those with *sattvic* nature prefer food items that promote health and longevity. These food items are endowed with four basic characteristics which make them tasty (*rasyāḥ*), juicy (*snigdhāḥ*), nourishing (*sthirā*), and hearty (*hṛdyā*). An example of nourishing (*sthirā*) food is ghee which stays in the blood stream for a long-time giving strength to the individual. Hearty (*hṛdyā*) food items are those (ex: sweet dishes) which not only give joy while they are consumed them but also create craving. Moderate amounts of such healthy, tasty food promote health and wellbeing, and induce good nature. Sri Vidyasagara Madhava Teertha gives an example of a lamp that requires both the wick (*batti*) and ghee/oil to give light. Similarly, a body needs ghee for nourishment which helps to light one’s intellect.

कट्वाम्ललवणात्युष्णतीक्ष्णरूक्षविदाहिनः ।
आहारा राजसस्येष्टा दुःखशोकामयप्रदाः ॥ ९ ॥
kaṭvamlalavaṇātyuṣṇatīkṣṇarūkṣavidāhinaḥ
āhārā rājasasyeṣṭā duḥkhaśokāmayapradāḥ

Rajasic (passionate) people like food items that are extremely bitter/spicy, acidic, salty, hot, pungent, sour, and burnt. These result in misery and discomfort at the time of consumption, and disease later. (17.9)

Comments: This verse describes the food habits of the *rajasic*. While food items which are sour, salty etc., are also essential for one’s wellbeing, they need to be

consumed in moderation. When consumed in excess (*atī*), they result in misery at the time of consumption. Long term ill effects include onset of diseases. For example, while salt is an essential source of sodium for the body, excess intake of salt over a prolonged period is known to result in high blood pressure. Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies that these food items when consumed in moderation and without resulting in discomfort or disease, can be considered *sattvic*.

यातयामं गतरसं पूति पर्युषितं च यत् ।
उच्छिष्टमपि चामेध्यं भोजनं तामसप्रियम् ॥ १० ॥
yātayāmaṁ gatarasaṁ pūti paryuṣitaṁ ca yat
ucchiṣṭam api cāmedhyaṁ bhojanaṁ tāmasapriyam

Tamasic (demoniac) people like food items that are stale, decomposed, foul, leftover, leavings of others, and impure. (17.10)

Comments: This verse describes the types of food items that appeal to the *tamasic*. Impure food items include prohibited ones such as alcohol. These food items are unhealthy regardless of the amount that is consumed.

Types of Ritual Sacrifices

अफलाकाङ्क्षिभिर्यज्ञो विधिदृष्टो य इज्यते ।
यष्टव्यमेवेति मनः समाधाय स सात्त्विकः ॥ ११ ॥
aphalāṅkṣibhir yajño vidhidṛṣṭo ya ijyate
yaṣṭavyam eveti manaḥ samādhāya sa sāttvikaḥ

अभिसन्धाय तु फलं दम्भार्थमपि चैव यत् ।
इज्यते भरतश्रेष्ठ तं यज्ञं विद्धि राजसम् ॥ १२ ॥

abhisaṁdhāya tu phalaṁ dambhārtham api caiva yat
ijyate bharataśreṣṭha taṁ yajñaṁ viddhi rājasam

विधिहीनमसृष्टान्नं मन्त्रहीनमदक्षिणम् ।
श्रद्धाविरहितं यज्ञं तामसं परिचक्षते ।। १३ ।।
vidhihīnam asṛṣṭānnaṁ mantrahīnam adakṣiṇam
śraddhāvirahitaṁ yajñaṁ tāmasaṁ paricakṣate

Ritual sacrifices, performed whole heartedly as per the scriptures and as a prescribed duty without any expectations, is *sattvic*. (17.11)

O Superior among Bharatas! Ritual sacrifices performed with expectations and as an outward show of power and wealth, is *rajasic*. (17.12)

Ritual sacrifices performed without following scriptural procedures, without feeding the needy, without proper chanting of hymns, without donating to charity, and without sincerity is *tamasic*. (17.13)

Comments: *Sattvic* ones perform ritual sacrifices as worship to the Lord. Feeding the needy and charitable giving are integral parts of any ritual sacrifice performed to propitiate deities. Those with *rajasic* nature, perform ritual sacrifices as a show to demonstrate their power in society. Those with *tamasic natures* perform such rituals with ulterior motives and never donate to those less fortunate.

Physical, Vocal, and Mental Austerity

देवद्विजगुरुप्राज्ञपूजनं शौचमार्जवम् ।
ब्रह्मचर्यमहिंसा च शारीरं तप उच्यते ।। १४ ।।

devadvijaguruprājñapūjanaṁ śaucam ārjavam
brahmacaryam ahiṁsā ca śārīraṁ tapa ucyate

अनुद्वेगकरं वाक्यं सत्यं प्रियहितं च यत् ।
स्वाध्यायाभ्यसनं चैव वाङ्मयं तप उच्यते ।। १५।।
anudvegakaraṁ vākyaṁ satyaṁ priyahitaṁ ca yat
svādhyāyābhyasanaṁ caiva vāṅmayaṁ tapa ucyate

मनःप्रसादः सौम्यत्वं मौनमात्मविनिग्रहः ।
भावसंशुद्धिरित्येतत्तपो मानसमुच्यते ।। १६ ।।
manaḥprasādaḥ saumyatvaṁ maunam ātmavinigrahaḥ
bhāvasaṁśuddhir ity etat tapo mānasam ucyate

Respecting and worshipping deities, scholars, teachers and learned ones, purity in mind and body, honesty, celibacy, and non-violence are physical austerities. (17.14)

Using words and speech that do not cause anxiety in others, that are pleasant to hear, that are truthful and aid in spiritual study constitutes austerity of words. (17.15)

Serenity in thinking, pleasant nature, purity in thoughts, an uncluttered mind, and a mind focused on the Lord constitute austerity of the mind. (17.16)

Comments: Austerity is self-discipline that is visible in one's actions. It has three components: physical, vocal, and mental. One's nature is also influenced by one's attitude and approach to austerity. Those with *sattvic* nature engage in physical austerity characterized by respect to deities, elders, teachers etc., in addition to internal and external purity of purpose. Their vocal austerity manifests in the words they choose in their discussions as also the

tone and tenor of their voice. Mental austerity is characterized by an uncluttered, tranquil, silent mind which is steadfastly focused on the Lord.

Austerity based on Faith

श्रद्धया परया तप्तं तपस्तत्त्रिविधं नरैः ।
अफलाकाङ्क्षिभिर्युक्तैः सात्त्विकं परिचक्षते ।। १७ ।।
śraddhayā parayā taptaṁ tapas tat trividhaṁ naraiḥ
aphalākāṅkṣibhir yuktaiḥ sāttvikaṁ paricakṣate

सत्कारमानपूजार्थं तपो दम्भेन चैव यत् ।
क्रियते तदिह प्रोक्तं राजसं चलमध्रुवम्।। १८ ।।
satkāramānapūjārthaṁ tapo dambhena caiva yat
kriyate tad iha proktaṁ rājasaṁ calam adhruvam

मूढग्राहेणात्मनो यत् पीडया क्रियते तपः ।
परस्योत्सादनार्थं वा तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् ।। १९ ।।
mūḍhagrāheṇātmano yat pīḍayā kriyate tapaḥ
parasyotsādanārthaṁ vā tat tāmasam udāhṛtam

Austerity sincerely observed by people is also of three types. *Sattvic* austerity is one that is performed as an offering to the Lord, without any expectation. (17.17)

Austerity performed to display one's wealth and position, and to gain adulation and praise from society, resulting in uneven, vanishing rewards is *rajasic*. (17.18)

Austerity performed out of superstitions, with great pain to the self and with the intention of harming others is *tamasic*. (17.19)

Comments: After having identified the characteristics of austerity exercised physically, vocally, and mentally, the next three verses describe the differences in the attitude and approach of those with *sattvic, rajasic*, and *tamasic natures*. *Sattvic* ones exercise austerity as service to the Lord, the *rajasic* approach austerity with an ulterior motive of societal recognition, and for the *tamasic*, austerity is meant to hurt others.

Charity based on Faith

दातव्यमिति यद्दानं दीयतेऽनुपकारिणे ।
देशे काले च पात्रे च तद्दानं सात्त्विकं स्मृतम् ।। २० ।।
dātavyam iti yad dānaṁ dīyatenupakāriṇe
deśe kāle ca pātre ca tad dānaṁ sāttvikaṁ smṛtam

यत्तु प्रत्युपकारार्थं फलमुद्दिश्य वा पुनः ।
दीयते च परिक्लिष्टं तद्दानं राजसं स्मृतम् ।। २१ ।।
yat tu prattyupakārārthaṁ phalam uddiśya vā punaḥ
dīyate ca parikliṣṭaṁ tad dānaṁ rājasaṁ smṛtam

अदेशकाले यद्दानम् अपात्रेभ्यश्च दीयते ।
असत्कृतमवज्ञातं तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् ।। २२ ।।
adeśakāle yad dānam apātrebhyaś ca dīyate
asatkṛtam avajñātaṁ tat tāmasam udāhṛtam

Charity given to the deserved with a feeling of duty, at appropriate places and times and without any expectations is *sattvic*. (17.20)

Charity given unwillingly, as if to return a favour and given with an expectation of returns, is *rajasic*. (17.21)

Charity given to the undeserving, with disrespect and without regard to appropriateness of place and time is *tamasic*. (17.22)

Comments: Charitable donations performed by individuals are also of three types. The *sattvic* donate whole heartedly without any expectation of recognition and consider it their duty. Their only goal is to please the Lord. The *rajasic* donate out of fear (of reprisals afterlife), out of expectations of societal recognition and often with unlawful earnings. The *tamasic* donate with ulterior motives to the undeserving and often disparage the recipients.

Concept of *Om, Tat, Sat*

ॐ तत्सदिति निर्देशो ब्रह्मणस्त्रिविधः स्मृतः ।
ब्राह्मणास्तेन वेदाश्च यज्ञाश्च विहिताः पुरा ॥ २३ ॥
oṁ tat sad iti nirdeśo brahmaṇas trividhaḥ smṛtaḥ
brāhmaṇās tena vedāś ca yajñāś ca vihitāḥ purā

In the scriptures, the Lord is addressed with three principal names- *Om* (omnipresent), *Tat* (one who is known indirectly, through the **Vedas**) and *Sat* (full of infinite auspicious attributes). The Lord made available the **Vedas** and Vedic sacrifices, and powered the intellect of priests to perform them. (17.23)

Comments: *Sattvic* living beings perform all their activities, especially ritual sacrifices, austerity, and charitable giving as a worship and offering to the Lord. It is important for one to remember the Lord before undertaking such activities. The next four verses state that the scriptures address the Lord with three succinct, yet

powerful adjectives, *Om*, *Tat* and *Sat*. These have special meanings. *Om* which is derived from '*otam protaha'* refers to the one who indwells (and supports) the universe. *Tat* means one who pervades the Gunas (qualities). It also means one who cannot be comprehended by the sense organs and can only be known through the scriptures. *Sat* refers to the Lord who is devoid of any defects and is full of infinite, auspicious attributes.

तस्मादोमित्युदाहृत्य यज्ञदानतपःक्रियाः ।
प्रवर्तन्ते विधानोक्ताः सततं ब्रह्मवादिनाम् ।। २४ ।।
tasmād om ity udāhṛtya yajñadānatapaḥkriyāḥ
pravartante vidhānoktāḥ satataṁ brahmavādinām

तदित्यनभिसंधाय फलं यज्ञतपःक्रियाः ।
दानक्रियाश्च विविधाः क्रियन्ते मोक्षकाङ्क्षिभिः ।। २५ ।।
tad ity anabhisaṁdhāya phalaṁ yajñatapaḥkriyāḥ
dānakriyāś ca vividhāḥ kriyante mokṣakāṅkṣibhiḥ

सद्भावे साधुभावे च सदित्येतत्प्रयुज्यते ।
प्रशस्ते कर्मणि तथा सच्छब्दः पार्थ युज्यते ।। २६ ।।
sadbhāve sādhubhāve ca sad ity etat prayujyate
praśaste karmaṇi tathā sacchabdaḥ pārtha yujyate

Hence, the activities of ritual sacrifice, austerity, and charity performed as per the scriptures are always initiated by invoking the primordial syllable '*Om*', as a prayer to the Lord Almighty. (17.24)

Those desirous of achieving eternal bliss and not interested in temporary heavenly pleasures perform sacrifices, penances and charity as an offering to the Lord

described by the word '*Tat*', as one who is to be understood indirectly (through the scriptures). (17.25)

O Partha! The Lord's name, '*Sat*', is used to represent existence and goodness. It is also used to denote auspicious activities. (17.26)

Comments: These three verses describe the impact of invoking the Lord's names *Om, Tat, Sat* at the time of performing activities such as ritual sacrifices, austerity, and charitable giving. Invoking the Lord's name *Om*, ensures that these activities will be rendered *sattvic*. Before chanting any hymn, one must precede it with *Om*, which renders the hymn fruitful. Likewise, one must complete chanting of hymns with *Om* in the end, else any blessings that would accrue from the hymn would be lost.

When one invokes the Lord's name *Tat*, one is reminded that the Lord is knowable indirectly (through the scriptures) and that one should perform activities without expectations of temporary rewards.

Invoking the Lord's name *Sat* will remind a seeker to be aware of the Lord's infinite, auspicious attributes, and activities such as the creation of the universe.

In summary, invoking the phrase *Om, Tat, Sat* at the time of performing virtuous activities will help a seeker develop a virtuous attitude and approach to them.

यज्ञे तपसि दाने च स्थितिः सदिति चोच्यते ।
कर्म चैव तदर्थीयं सदित्येवाभिधीयते ।। २७ ।।

yajñe tapasi dāne ca sthitiḥ sad iti cocyate
karma caiva tadarthīyaṁ sad ity evābhidhīyate

अश्रद्धया हुतं दत्तं तपस्तप्तं कृतं च यत् ।
असदित्युच्यते पार्थ न च तत् प्रेत्य नो इह ।। २८ ।।
aśraddhayā hutaṁ dattaṁ tapas taptaṁ kṛtaṁ ca yat
asad ity ucyate pārtha na ca tat prepya no iha

The strong conviction that one has in performing sacrifices, penances and charity is also represented by the Lord's name '*Sat*', as also activities that are performed as an offering to the Lord. (17.27)

O Partha! Sacrifices performed, charity given, and austerities observed, if done without faith and devotion to the Lord will be counterproductive and constitute 'A*sat*'. Such activities help neither here nor hereafter. (17.28)

Comments: The Lord concludes the discussion of 'The Threefold Faith' with these two verses by summarizing the characteristics of activities performed with sincerity and those performed without sincerity. Activities performed with sincerity, without expectations of rewards and as an offering to the Lord will indeed help a seeker reach the Lord's abode. Activities that are performed with ulterior motives for societal recognition, without following scriptural procedures and without offering to the Lord are inauspicious and will neither help in this world nor in afterlife. Hence faith and sincerity are very essential when performing activities.

Summary of Chapter 17

In this chapter the Lord identifies the three divisions of faith - *sattvic, rajasic* and *tamasic* which influence the attitudes and activities of living beings. These attributes are innate (*swabhava*) to individual souls. The impact of

these attributes on activities such as worship, food habits, ritual sacrifices, austerity, and charitable services are described. Verses (17.4) to (17.7) describe the mode of propitiation of living beings. Verses (17.8) to (17.10) describe food habits. Verses (17.11) to (17.13) identify ritual sacrifices based on one's innate attributes. Verses (17.14) to (17.19) describe one's approach to austerity and meditation. Verses (17.20) to (17.22) address the issue of charitable giving. Verses (17.23) to (17.27) describe the approach towards ritual sacrifices and penance performed by *sattvic* beings desirous of *moksha*, with special explanation on *Om, Tat,* and *Sat*, the three principle names of the Lord Almighty.

।। इति सप्तदशोऽध्यायः ।।

End of Chapter 17

अष्टादशोऽध्यायः – मोक्षसन्न्यासयोगः
Chapter 18 - Liberation and Renunciation

Chapter Introduction: This chapter of 78 verses is termed *Mokshasanyasa Yoga* (Liberation and Renunciation). It starts with a discussion on the subtle differences between renunciation (*sanyasa*) and relinquishment of rewards from labour (*tyaga*). The types of rewards from actions are also discussed. The five prerequisites of performing any action are identified. Different types of knowledge, action, doers, intellect, determination, and happiness are also discussed. Additional details are provided on four societal categories of people which were briefly indicated in (4.13). The concept of liberation (*moksha*) is discussed in detail in this chapter. The first 55 verses contain discussions on the topics identified so far. The Lord concludes His sermon in the next 17 verses. Arjuna responds to Lord Krishna's entire teaching in verse 73. Sanjaya, who has been describing the proceedings in the war to King Dhrutarashtra concludes his commentary in the remaining 5 verses.

Arjuna starts by requesting Krishna to explain the difference between renunciation (*sanyasa*) and relinquishment (*tyaga*) as both seem to imply the same. The Lord provides answers to Arjuna's questions with a detailed description of the various aspects of renunciation and relinquishment. This chapter expands on the concept of doership, provides more details on the influence of the three qualities of nature and gives additional explanation on societal categories. There is further an elaborate discussion on the methods to achieve salvation (*moksha*). The Lord also describes the glory of the **Gita**.

Renunciation v/s Relinquishment

अर्जुन उवाच ।
सन्न्यासस्य महाबाहो तत्त्वमिच्छामि वेदितुम् ।
त्यागस्य च हृषीकेश पृथक् केशिनिषूदन ॥ १ ॥
arjuna uvāca
saṁnyāsasya mahābāho tattvam icchāmi veditum
tyāgasya ca hṛṣīkeśa pṛthak keśiniṣūdana

Arjuna said:

O Krishna, Mighty Armed One! O Hrishikesha! O Slayer of Demon Keshi! I would like to understand the difference between renunciation and relinquishment. (18.1)

Comments: In verse (5.2), it was stated that renunciation (*sanyāsa*) is essential to attain liberation (*moksha*), and in verse (12.12) relinquishment (*tyāga*) was lauded as a superior means to attain liberation (*moksha*). Arjuna wants to know the difference between these two approaches. The Lord provides a detailed response to Arjuna in verses (18.2) to (18.12).

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
काम्यानां कर्मणां न्यासं सन्न्यासं कवयो विदुः ।
सर्वकर्मफलत्यागं प्राहुस्त्यागं विचक्षणाः ॥ २ ॥
śrībhagavān uvāca
kāmyānāṁ karmaṇāṁ nyāsaṁ saṁnyāsaṁ kavayo viduḥ
sarvakarmaphalatyāgaṁ prāhus tyāgaṁ vicakṣaṇāḥ

त्याज्यं दोषवदित्येके कर्म प्राहुर्मनीषिणः ।
यज्ञदानतपःकर्म न त्याज्यमिति चापरे ॥ ३ ॥
tyājyaṁ doṣavad ity eke karma prāhur manīṣiṇaḥ
yajñadānatapaḥkarma na tyājyam iti cāpare

The Lord said:

Learned ones say that renunciation is the abandonment of activities performed for the sake of desired outcomes. The experienced say that relinquishment is forsaking of fruits of any action. (18.2)

The wise declare that engaging in desire ridden activities should be relinquished as they entangle a soul. Others say that one should never abandon activities such as ritual sacrifice, charity, and penance. (18.3)

Comments: The Lord identifies four principles in these verses – (i) abandonment of activities performed for mundane desires (ii) forsaking any rewards from action (except the lofty goal of earning the Lord's grace) (iii) abandonment of activities which entangle one, and (iv) non-abandonment of prescribed activities of ritual sacrifices, charity and austerity. Sri Madhwacharya in [GB] and [GTN] clarifies that all these principles are required for one to make progress in one's spiritual journey. The use of terms '*kavayo'* (learned ones), '*vicakṣaṇāḥ*' (the experienced), and'*manīṣiṇaḥ*' (the wise) to describe the proponents of these four principles is proof that all four are desirable qualities in a seeker.

निश्चयं शृणु मे तत्र त्यागे भरतसत्तम ।
त्यागो हि पुरुषव्याघ्र त्रिविधः सम्प्रकीर्तितः ॥ ४ ॥

niścayaṁ śṛṇu me tatra tyāge bharatasattama
tyāgo hi puruṣavyāghra trividhaḥ saṁprakīrtitaḥ

O Superior among Bharatas! Listen to My ruling on the issue of relinquishment. O Superior among Men! Relinquishment is of three types. (18.4)

Comments: To clarify that there is no contradiction between renunciation and relinquishment, the Lord states that relinquishment is of three types. However, these three types are not identified in this verse. Sri Rayaru in [GV] describes the three types of relinquishment as follows-

1. As per verse (18.2) relinquishment is forsaking rewards of activities.

2. As will be seen in verse (18.6) relinquishment is forsaking ownership in activities.

3. As will be seen in verse (18.17) relinquishment is not assuming independent doership in activities.

Another interpretation for the types of relinquishment is classification based on *sattvic* (pious), *rajasic* (passionate) and *tamasic* (ignorant) modes explained later in verses (18.7) to (18.9).

यज्ञदानतपः कर्म न त्याज्यं कार्यमेव तत् ।
यज्ञो दानं तपश्चैव पावनानि मनीषिणाम् ।। ५ ।।
yajñadānatapaḥkarma na tyājyaṁ kāryam eva tat
yajño dānaṁ tapaś caiva pāvanāni manīṣiṇām

एतान्यपि तु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा फलानि च ।
कर्तव्यानीति मे पार्थ निश्चितं मतमुत्तमम् ।। ६ ।।

etāny api tu karmāṇi saṅgaṁ tyaktvā phalāni ca
kartavyānīti me pārtha niścitaṁ matam uttamam

One should never abandon performing prescribed ritual sacrifices, austerity, and charity. These helps purify a person. (18.5)

O Partha! One should detach oneself from ego in actions and perform them without expectations. This is My definite opinion. (18.6)

Comments: In these two verses, the Lord mandates that one should never abandon one's prescribed duties and should perform them without attachment to the actions themselves and without expectations. As the Lord states that performing ritual sacrifices, austerity and charity are mandatory for everyone, how does this apply to ascetics, and to those who do not have access to Vedic knowledge? Ascetics are prohibited from performing fire rituals. And since they do not earn any income, they cannot perform any charity. Sri Rayaru in [GV] states that ritual sacrifices are of different types as stated earlier in verse (4.25) etc. The ritual sacrifice, for ascetics, is *jnana yagna* (sacrifice of knowledge) which involves continuous study of scriptures, teaching students, lectures to the lay people etc. Charity, for ascetics, is donating their time and knowledge to those in need. Austerity, for ascetics, is observing strict rituals such as celibacy, fasting etc. Those who do not have access to Vedic knowledge perform ritual sacrifice in the form of prayers and bhajans on the Lord, and austerity for them is being truthful, fasting etc.

Types of Renunciation

नियतस्य तु सन्न्यासः कर्मणो नोपपद्यते ।
मोहात्तस्य परित्यागस्तामसः परिकीर्तितः ॥ ७ ॥
niyatasya tu saṁnyāsaḥ karmaṇo nopapadyate
mohāt tasya parityāgas tāmasaḥ parikīrtitaḥ

दुःखमित्येव यत्कर्म कायक्लेशभयात् यजेत् ।
स कृत्वा राजसं त्यागं नैव त्यागफलं लभेत् ॥ ८ ॥
duḥkham ity eva yat karma kāyakleśabhayāt tyajet
sa kṛtvā rājasaṁ tyāgaṁ naiva tyāgaphalaṁ labhet

कार्यमित्येव यत् कर्म नियतं क्रियतेऽर्जुन ।
सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा फलं चैव स त्यागः सात्त्विको मतः ॥ ९ ॥
kāryam ity eva yat karma niyataṁ kriyaterjuna
saṅgaṁ tyaktvā phalaṁ caiva sa tyāgaḥ sāttviko mataḥ

Renouncing prescribed duties is never appropriate. Avoiding such actions out of ignorance is *tamasic*. (18.7)

Abandonment of prescribed duties under the pretext of stress and physical difficulty is *rajasic*. No one can earn the Lord's grace through such renunciation. (18.8)

O Arjuna! Performing prescribed duties without attachment to actions and without expectations is *sattvic* relinquishment. (18.9)

Comments: In these verses, the Lord identifies the types of renunciation practiced by different people, based on their intrinsic nature. Some completely ignore performing prescribed duties out of ignorance or false knowledge. Such renunciation is *tamasic* (nescient). There

are some who are aware of their prescribed duties but find excuses such as bodily discomfort to avoid doing them. Their abandonment is *rajasic* and does not earn the Lord's grace. The *sattvic* consider their prescribed duties as an obligation and perform them without attachment and expectations. Their renunciation of attachment to activities and rewards is *sattvic* and is to be followed by everyone.

Characteristics of Renunciation

न द्वेष्ट्यकुशलं कर्म कुशले नानुषज्जते ।
त्यागी सत्त्वसमाविष्टो मेधावी छिन्नसंशयः ॥ १० ॥
na dveṣṭy akuśalaṁ karma kuśale nānuṣajjate
tyāgī sattvasamāviṣṭo medhāvī chinnasaṁśayaḥ

न हि देहभृता शक्यं त्यक्तुं कर्माण्यशेषतः ।
यस्तु कर्मफलत्यागी स त्यागीत्यभिधीयते ॥ ११ ॥
na hi dehabhṛtā śakyaṁ tyaktuṁ karmāṇy aśeṣataḥ
yas tu karmaphalatyāgī sa tyāgīty abhidhīyate

अनिष्टमिष्टं मिश्रं च त्रिविधं कर्मणः फलम् ।
भवत्यत्यागिनां प्रेत्य न तु सन्न्यासिनां क्वचित् ॥ १२ ॥
aniṣṭam iṣṭaṁ miśraṁ ca trividhaṁ karmaṇaḥ phalam
bhavaty atyāginām pretya na tu saṁnyāsinām kvacit

A *sattvic* renouncer is one who neither despises unpleasant activities nor craves for pleasant activities, one who offers all activities to the Lord, one who is pious by nature, one who has understood the Lord, and one who has no doubts about the nature of the Lord and the Universe. (18.10)

One with a physical body can never completely renounce all activities (as even breathing is an activity). One who has relinquished the fruits of labour is the ideal *tyagi*. (18.11)

Those who perform activities with expectations will experience either pleasant, or unpleasant, or mixed rewards after they leave this world. This does not apply to those who perform duties without expectations. (18.12)

Comments: These three verses provide more details on the characteristics of renunciation based on the nature and approach of the seeker. As per Rayaru in [GV], verse (18.10) identifies five characteristics of a sattvic renunciant as one who (i) does not abandon prescribed duties that may be momentarily unpleasant, (ii) does not crave for activities that may be momentarily pleasant, (iii) has a pious nature, (iv) has understood properly the Lord's prowess, and (v) has no doubts regarding the distinction between the universe and the Lord Almighty. Verse (18.11) counters a position that some hold that a renouncer should forsake all activities. This verse states that for a living being it is impossible to forsake all activities, as even breathing is a type of activity. An ideal renouncer is one who forsakes the rewards from actions and not actions themselves. Verse (18.12) explains the distinction between a seeker who performs activities with expectations of rewards and one who performs prescribed duties with no expectations. The former one experiences three different types of destinations in afterlife: downfall, heavenly rewards, and rebirth in this world (depending on the approach and nature of their activities such as *tamasic, sattvic, rajasic*). However, one who performs prescribed duties forsaking rewards will not experience these types

of destinations. Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies that those seekers who have achieved self-realization and do not have any obligations to perform activities, will achieve higher bliss in salvation depending on the extent of their activities. As indicated in (18.2), renunciation is the abandonment of activities performed for the sake of desired outcomes, and relinquishment is forsaking of fruits of any action. Superior seekers who have achieved self-realization have both these characteristics (renunciation and relinquishment).

Pre-requisites for Activities

पञ्चैतानि महाबाहो कारणानि निबोध मे ।
सांख्ये कृतान्ते प्रोक्तानि सिद्धये सर्वकर्मणाम् ॥ १३ ॥
pañcaitāni mahābāho kāraṇāni nibodha me
sāṁkhye kṛtānte proktāni siddhaye sarvakarmaṇām

अधिष्ठानं तथा कर्ता करणं च पृथग्विधम् ।
विविधाश्च पृथक्चेष्टा दैवं चैवात्र पञ्चमम् ॥ १४ ॥
adhiṣṭhānaṁ tathā kartā karaṇaṁ ca pṛthagvidham
vividhāś ca pṛthakceṣṭā daivaṁ caivātra pañcamam

शरीरवाङ्मनोभिर्यत् कर्म प्रारभते नरः ।
न्याय्यं वा विपरीतं वा पञ्चैते तस्य हेतवः ॥ १५ ॥
śarīravāṅmanobhir yat karma prārabhate naraḥ
nyāyyaṁ vā viparītaṁ vā pañcaite tasya hetavaḥ

O Arjuna, Mighty Armed One! There are five pre-requisites for completion of any activity as enumerated in the *Sankhya* scripture. Learn them from Me. (18.13)

They are as follows - the place for conducting activity (such as body, earth), the performer (human, divine), the apparatus (sense organs, fire), resulting rituals (meditation, prayer) and divinity (the Lord). (18.14)

Whatever activity one performs through the body or the mind or speech, whether it is right or wrong, that activity will require the above five pre-requisites for completion. (18.15)

Comments: As performance of activities is mandatory for everyone, it is important to understand the prerequisites for performing them. These verses identify the five prerequisites for action. Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies that these are as per the *Sankhya* scripture which was composed by the Lord in the form of Kapila. Verse (18.14) identifies the five prerequisites, and verse (18.15) clarifies that these five prerequisites are essential for performing any activity, be it physical, vocal, or mental.

The concept of prerequisites for activities can be illustrated with an example. Let us take the case of a seeker practicing meditation (*dhyana*). Following are the five prerequisites –

* place = physical body
* performer = living being (dependent performer)
* apparatus = living being's mind
* resulting ritual = focusing the mind
* divinity = Lord Almighty (who powers everyone's actions).

For example, in the case of one cooking rice, these five aspects are – place (kitchen), performer (cook), apparatus (utensils, stove), resulting ritual (rice), and divinity (Lord who powers this activity).

Awareness of Doership

तत्रैवं सति कर्तारम् आत्मानं केवलं तु यः ।
पश्यत्यकृतबुद्धित्वान्न स पश्यति दुर्मतिः ॥ १६ ॥
tatraivaṁ sati kartāram ātmānaṁ kevalaṁ tu yaḥ
paśyaty akṛtabuddhitvān na sa paśyati durmatiḥ

यस्य नाहंकृतो भावो बुद्धिर्यस्य न लिप्यते ।
हत्वाऽपि स इमाँल्लोकान्न हन्ति न निबध्यते ॥ १७ ॥
yasya nāhaṁkṛto bhāvo buddhir yasya na lipyate
hatvā api sa imāṁl lokān na hanti na nibadhyate

Hence the unwise one, who foolishly considers the self to be the sole performer of any action, is indeed devoid of proper knowledge. (18.16)

One who is not under the delusion of being the sole performer and has no expectation on the outcome of action, will not be termed a killer even if that person has killed in the course of performing prescribed duties. Such a person is not tainted with any sin. (18.17)

Comments: These two verses amplify the need for one to be aware of the concept of doership. As there are five clear prerequisites for the creation of any activity, no one should be under the delusion of sole, independent doership. Verse (18.17) goes a step further and states that a seeker who is not under the delusion of independent doership

and performs prescribed activities with no expectations of rewards, will not be tainted by any sin, even if that activity involves destruction of population. This statement can raise issues as to how one can be absolved of great sins that normally accompany such destructive activities. Sri Rayaru in [GV] based on Sri Madhwacharya's [GB] and Sri Jaya Teertha's [PD] clarifies this concept with concrete examples. Lord Rudra (who governs the act of universe's dissolution) and Lord Yama (the deity of death) are associated with destruction. However, these deities perform these activities as directed by the independent, omniscient Lord Almighty and have no delusion that they are performing these on their own. Hence, they are not tainted by any sin. However, deity Indra who kills Vrutasura, was tainted with some sin as his actions were accompanied by ego.

Concept of Doership

ज्ञानं ज्ञेयं परिज्ञाता त्रिविधा कर्मचोदना ।
करणं कर्म कर्तेति त्रिविधः कर्मसंग्रहः ॥ १८ ॥

jñānaṁ jñeyaṁ parijñātā trividhā karmacodanā
karaṇaṁ karma karteti trividhaḥ karmasaṁgrahaḥ

The motivations for any activity are three-fold - knowledge about the activity (*jnana*), effort (*prayatna*), and the performer of the activity (*jeeva*). The three main pre-requisites for any activity are - the apparatus, the resulting ritual, and the doer. (18.18)

Comments: This verse describes the concept of doership where the motivations for performing any activity are indicated, along with the prerequisites for such

activities. While verse (18.14) described the five prerequisites for performing any activity, these five are summarized into 3 types – the apparatus (which combines the place of operation and the material utilities), the resulting ritual and the doer (which combines the independent doer and divinity, both referring to the Lord Almighty). In addition to the prerequisites that are essential for one to perform any activity, one also needs motivation to engage in that activity. This verse identifies the 3 motivators as – knowledge about the activity to be performed (*jnana*), effort (*prayatna*) that one needs to put in and the performer of the activity (*jeeva*). The performer of the activity is the living individual who acts based on the power granted by the Lord. The individual being is not an independent doer but acts under the control and supervision of the independent Lord. The concept of doership is explained in detail by Rayaru in [GV] based on Sri Madhwacharya's [GB] and [GTN]. This topic was covered previously in comments for verse (5.14).

One of the questions that arises is about prescribed duties mandated in the scriptures. Do they apply to the Lord, individual souls, or inert matter? Sri Rayaru in [GV] explains that by the process of elimination, one can conclude that prescribed duties apply only to individuals. This is because inert matter cannot act, and the Lord Almighty has no obligation or mandate to act (verse 3.22). Now, one can question the feasibility of a living being as a doer, while the real doer is described as the Lord Almighty. Sri Rayaru clarifies that while the Lord is the independent doer, living beings are dependent doers. In this sense, the mandates prescribed in the scriptures apply to living beings who can perform activities based on the

material strength and powers granted to them by the Lord. If the Lord as the independent doer is responsible for all activities, what is the role of living beings? Living beings have an intrinsic intent (*iccha*) to achieve salvation which leads them to make attempts (*prayatna*). By the grace of the Lord, they are given the ability to perform actions. Hence, living beings are responsible for their actions.

ज्ञानं कर्म च कर्ता च त्रिधैव गुणभेदतः ।
प्रोच्यते गुणसंख्याने यथावच्छृणु तान्यपि ।। १९ ।।
jñānaṁ karma ca kartā ca tridhaiva guṇabhedataḥ
procyate guṇasaṁkhyāne yathāvac chṛṇu tāny api

As per *Sankhya* scriptures, knowledge, activity, and the doer are of three types, and are differentiated based on their natural attributes. Listen to the explanation with attention. (18.19)

Comments: After having described the prerequisites for actions and the concepts of doership, the Lord provides a detailed explanation on the categories of the three aspects of action – knowledge, resulting activity, and the doer. These aspects are influenced by the three qualities of nature, namely *sattv, rajas*, and *tamas*. The Lord also states the scriptural basis for this classification as *Vedic Sankhya*.

Threefold Knowledge

सर्वभूतेषु येनैकं भावमव्ययमीक्षते ।
अविभक्तं विभक्तेषु तज्ज्ञानं विद्धि सात्त्विकम्।। २० ।।
sarvabhūteṣu yenaikaṁ bhāvam avyayam īkṣate
avibhaktaṁ vibhakteṣu taj jñānaṁ viddhi sāttvikam

That knowledge which is about the nature of the imperishable Lord Almighty as an independent entity residing in everyone and everything, yet different from them, and superior to them is *sattvic*. (18.20)

Comments: *Sattvic* knowledge is one which recognizes the same Lord as being present in different entities in the universe, whether living beings or inert matter. This verse uses the word '*bhava*' (one who is present) to indicate the Lord. Later, in verse (18.61), the Lord explicitly states that He is present in everyone's hearts. Hence, the reference in this verse to the entity residing in everyone, the Lord Almighty Himself. The concept described in this verse was also stated previously in (13.17) and (5.18).

पृथक्त्वेन तु यज्ज्ञानं नानाभावान् पृथग्विधान् ।
वेत्ति सर्वेषु भूतेषु तज्ज्ञानं विद्धि राजसम् ॥ २१ ॥

pṛthaktvena tu yaj jñānaṁ nānābhāvān pṛthagvidhān
vetti sarveṣu bhūteṣu taj jñānaṁ viddhi rājasam

That knowledge which teaches that everyone and everything in the Universe is different from each other and from the Lord, but does not teach about the supremacy of the Lord is *rajasic*. (18.21)

Comments: Those with *rajasic* knowledge are aware that everyone (living beings) and everything (inert matter) in the universe are different (*pṛthak*). However, they do not have firm conviction with regard to the supremacy of the Lord. This concept is implied using the word '*tu*' (meaning 'however'), since the other two components of the universe (living beings and inert matter) were stated explicitly.

यत्तु कृत्स्नवदेकस्मिन् कार्ये सक्तमहैतुकम् ।
अतत्त्वार्थवदल्पं च तत् तामसमुदाहृतम् ।। २२ ।।
yat tu kṛtsnavad ekasmin kārye saktam ahetukam
atattvārthavad alpaṁ ca tat tāmasam udāhṛtam

Knowledge that tries to equate the individual to inert matter or to the Lord and is based on misinterpretation of the scriptures is *tamasic*. (18.22)

Comments: Sri Rayaru in [GV] based on Sri Madhwacharya's [GTN] and the **Padma Purana**, provides three interpretations for this verse based on the different meanings for the word *kṛtsna* (complete). This word can mean either the Lord Almighty or the world. Those with *tamasic* knowledge –

* believe in the identity of the individual soul and the Lord.
* believe in the identity of the individual soul and the inert world.
* believe that the world arose from one individual soul, and hence self-knowledge also implies knowledge about the entire world.

Threefold Activities

नियतं सङ्गरहितमरागद्वेषतः कृतम् ।
अफलप्रेप्सुना कर्म यत् तत् सात्त्विकमुच्यते ।। २३ ।।
niyataṁ saṅgarahitam arāgadveṣataḥ kṛtam
aphalaprepsunā karma yat tat sāttvikam ucyate

यत्तु कामेप्सुना कर्म साहंकारेण वा पुनः ।
क्रियते बहुलायासं तद्राजसमुदाहृतम् ।। २४ ।।

yat tu kāmepsunā karma sāhaṁkāreṇa vā punaḥ
kriyate bahulāyāsaṁ tad rājasam udāhṛtam

अनुबन्धं क्षयं हिंसाम् अनवेक्ष्य च पौरुषम् ।
मोहादारभ्यते कर्म यत्तत् तामसमुच्यते ॥ २५ ॥
anubandhaṁ kṣayaṁ hiṁsām anapekṣya ca pauruṣam
mohād ārabhyate karma yat tat tāmasam ucyate

Prescribed activity that is performed without attachment, without arrogance, without aversion, and performed without expectation on the outcome is *sattvic*. (18.23)

Activity performed with ego and with expectation of the outcome, even when performed with great physical effort is *rajasic*. (18.24)

Activities performed without realizing the consequences, not having lasting rewards, with no regard to one's abilities, with potential violent impact on others, and performed with ignorance are *tamasic*. (18.25)

Comments: These three verses describe the types of activities based on the influence of the three qualities of nature, *sattva, rajas*, and *tamas*. Sri Rayaru in [GV], draws attention to verses mentioned in chapter 3 ((3.30) and (3.31)), where the Lord had stated that those who perform activities without expectations, only as an offering to Him, will not be entangled by the effects of activities. This is the nature of *sattvic* activities.

Threefold Doers

मुक्तसङ्गोऽनहंवादी धृत्युत्साहसमन्वितः ।
सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योः निर्विकारः कर्ता सात्त्विक उच्यते ॥ २६ ॥

muktasaṅgonahaṁvādī dhṛtyutsāhasamanvitaḥ
siddhyasiddhyor nirvikāraḥ kartā sāttvika ucyate

रागी कर्मफलप्रेप्सुर्लुब्धो हिंसात्मकोऽशुचिः ।
हर्षशोकान्वितः कर्ता राजसः परिकीर्तितः ।। २७ ।।
rāgī karmaphalaprepsur lubdho hiṁsātmakośuciḥ
harṣaśokānvitaḥ kartā rājasaḥ parikīrtitaḥ

अयुक्तः प्राकृतः स्तब्धः शठो नैष्कृतिकोऽलसः ।
विषादी दीर्घसूत्री च कर्ता तामस उच्यते ।। २८ ।।
ayuktaḥ prākṛtaḥ stabdhaḥ śaṭhao naiṣkṛtikolasaḥ
viṣādī dīrghasūtrī ca kartā tāmasa ucyate

One who has no attachment to the outcome of actions, who is not arrogant, who is enthusiastic about performing prescribed actions and who is unmoved by success or failure, is a *sattvic* doer. (18.26)

One who performs activities to gain fame, has expectations on the outcome, is miserly, harms others, does not have mental or physical purity, and is impacted by success or failure of actions, is a *rajasic* doer. (18.27)

One who performs activities without offering them to the Lord, who is not strengthened by devotion to the Lord, who is egoistic, who acts with hatred, who performs heinous activities, who is lethargic, who does not act with mental firmness, and who is always procrastinating, is a *tamasic* doer. (18.28)

Comments: These three verses describe the nature of doers who perform activities under the influence of the three qualities of nature. Given that the doers are of three types, it is understandable that the activities performed by

them are also of three types as explained previously in verses (18.23) to (18.25).

Threefold Intelligence and Determination

बुद्धेर्भेदं धृतेश्चैव गुणतस्त्रिविधं शृणु ।
प्रोच्यमानमशेषेण पृथक्त्वेन धनञ्जय ॥ २९ ॥
buddher bhedaṁ dhṛteś caiva guṇatas trividhaṁ śṛṇu
procyamānam aśeṣeṇa pṛthaktvena dhanaṁjaya

O Dhananjaya! Due to the influence of the three qualities of nature, the attributes of intelligence and determination are also of three types. Listen to My explanations of each of these. (18.29)

Comments: The next few verses provide details about the impact of the three qualities of nature on the attributes of intelligence and determination (or firmness). These in turn impact one's attitude and approach towards activities – physical, vocal, or mental.

प्रवृत्तिं च निवृत्तिं च कार्याकार्ये भयाभये ।
बन्धं मोक्षं च या वेत्ति बुद्धिः सा पार्थ सत्त्विकी ॥ ३० ॥
pravṛttiṁ ca nivṛttiṁ ca kāryākārye bhayābhaye
bandhaṁ mokṣaṁ ca yā vetti buddhiḥ sā pārtha sāttvikī

यया धर्ममधर्मं च कार्यं चाकार्यमेव च ।
अयथावत् प्रजानाति बुद्धिः सा पार्थ राजसी ॥ ३१ ॥
yayā dharmam adharmaṁ ca kāryaṁ cākāryam eva ca
ayathāvat prajānāti buddhiḥ sā pārtha rājasī

अधर्मं धर्ममिति या मन्यते तमसाऽऽवृता ।
सर्वार्थान् विपरीतांश्च बुद्धिः सा पार्थ तामसी ॥ ३२ ॥

adharmaṁ dharmam iti yā manyate tamasāvṛtā
sarvārthān viparītāñś ca buddhiḥ sā pārtha tāmasī

O Partha! Engaging in virtuous activities, avoiding sinful activities and being aware of dualities such as prescribed and prohibited activities, fear and grace, bondage and liberation, are due to *sattvic* intelligence. (18.30)

O Partha! Not being able to discriminate between virtuous and sinful activities, confused between prescribed and prohibited activities is due to *rajasic* intelligence. (18.31)

O Partha! Intelligence covered by ignorance which considers unrighteous activities as virtuous ones and which misinterprets reality as illusion, is *tamasic*. (18.32)

Comments: In these verses, the faculty of intelligence appears to be itself performing the activities indicated. Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies that intelligence, being an inert faculty cannot act independently. The activities stated are performed by an individual whose intelligence is either *sattvic, rajasic*, or *tamasic*. When someone refers to a strong leader as a lion among people, the implication is that the leader is strong like a lion. It does not mean that the leader is a lion.

धृत्या यया धारयते मनःप्राणेन्द्रियक्रियाः ।
योगेनाव्यभिचारिण्या धृतिः सा पार्थ सात्त्विकी ॥ ३३ ॥

dhṛtyā yayā dhārayate manaḥprāṇendriyakriyāḥ
yogenāvyabhicāriṇyā dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha sāttvikī

यया तु धर्मकामार्थान् धृत्या धारयतेऽर्जुन ।
प्रसङ्गेन फलाकाङ्क्षी धृतिः सा पार्थ राजसी ॥ ३४ ॥

yayā tu dharmakāmārthān dhṛtyā dhārayaterjuna
prasaṅgena phalākāṅkṣī dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha rājasī

यया स्वप्नं भयं शोकं विषादं मदमेव च ।
न विमुञ्चति दुर्मेधा धृतिः सा पार्थ तामसी ।। ३५ ।।
yayā svapnaṁ bhayaṁ śokaṁ viṣādaṁ madam eva ca
na vimuñcati durmedhā dhṛtiḥ sā pārtha tāmasī

O Partha! Determination that is rooted in devotion to the Lord, which regulates the activities of the mind, the life breath (*pranayama*) and the sense organs, is *sattvic*. (18.33)

O Partha! Determination that leads one to pursue fame, riches, and sense gratification with excessive ego, is *rajasic*. (18.34)

O Partha! The determination with which one is unable to overcome excessive sleep, fear, unhappiness, worry, and arrogance, is *tamasic*. (18.35)

Comments: *Sattvic* determination is a result of one's unflinching devotion to the Lord even under difficult circumstances. *Tamasic* determination leads one to hatred towards the Lord.

The Threefold Happiness

सुखं त्विदानीं त्रिविधं शृणु मे भरतर्षभ ।
अभ्यासाद्रमते यत्र दुःखान्तं च निगच्छति ।। ३६ ।।
sukhaṁ tv idānīṁ trividhaṁ śṛṇu me bharatarṣabha
abhyāsād ramate yatra duḥkhāntaṁ ca nigacchhati

यत्तदग्रे विषमिव परिणामेऽमृतोपमम् ।
तत्सुखं सात्त्विकं प्रोक्तम् आत्मबुद्धिप्रसादजम् ।। ३७ ।।

yat tadagre viṣam iva pariṇāmemṛtopamam
tat sukhaṁ sāttvikaṁ proktam ātmabuddhiprasādajam

O Superior among Bharatas! Now listen to the three types of happiness. That happiness which increases with practice, frees one from distress, feels poisonous in the beginning and turns out to be nectar like towards the end, is *sattvic*. This is achieved through peace of mind and the express grace of the Lord Almighty. (18.36) (18.37)

Comments: The pursuit of unending happiness is every living being's goal. However, the type of happiness that one pursues is shaped by the influence of the three qualities of nature. In verse (18.37), the phrase '*buddhiprasādajam*' seems to imply that *sattvic* happiness arises from peace of mind. The mind is inert. How can the inert mind result in happiness? Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies that this phrase is preceded by '*atma*' (referring to the Lord Almighty). Hence the implication is that one can experience *sattvic* happiness only by the Lord's grace, which also leads to peace of mind.

विषयेन्द्रियसंयोगाद् यत्तदग्रेऽमृतोपमम् ।
परिणामे विषमिव तत्सुखं राजसं स्मृतम् ।। ३८ ।।
viṣayendriyasañyogād yat tad agremṛtopamam
pariṇāme viṣam iva tat sukhaṁ rājasaṁ smṛtam

यदग्रे चानुबन्धे च सुखं मोहनमात्मनः ।
निद्रालस्यप्रमादोत्थं तत्तामसमुदाहृतम् ।। ३९ ।।
yad agre cānubandhe ca sukhaṁ mohanam ātmanaḥ
nidrālasyapramādotthaṁ tat tāmasam udāhṛtam

Happiness arising out of the interaction between the sense organs and the objects of gratification, which initially feels like nectar and turns out to be poisonous in the end, is *rajasic*. (18.38)

Happiness arising out of excessive sleep, lethargy, and forgetfulness, which creates addiction from beginning to end is *tamasic*. (18.39)

Comments: These two verses describe *rajasic* and *tamasic* types of happiness. *Rajasic* happiness is that which is experienced bodily through the sense organs. This excludes the happiness one feels during deep sleep (*sushupti*) as one does not have awareness of sense objects in this state. Examples of *tamasic* happiness are those experienced due to indulgence in prohibited substances which are known to be addictive as well as unhealthy.

Universal Qualities of Nature

न तदस्ति पृथिव्यां वा दिवि देवेषु वा पुनः ।
सत्त्वं प्रकृतिजैर्मुक्तं यदेभिः स्यात्त्रिभिर्गुणैः ।। ४० ।।
na tad asti pṛthivyāṁ vā divi deveṣu vā punaḥ
sattvaṁ prakṛtijair muktaṁ yad ebhiḥ syāt tribhir guṇaiḥ

There is no entity, among those on earth or among the deities in heavenly worlds that is not influenced by the three qualities of nature. (18.40)

Comments: This verse states that every living being is influenced by the three qualities of nature, although in different proportions. Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies that this does not apply to liberated souls, as this verse specifically identifies only living beings on earth, and the heavenly

deities. The word '*punah*' in this verse, indicating 'and' as per Sri Satyadhyana Teertha's [GPC], implies additional aspects not expressly stated in this verse. Sri Rayaru in [GV] based on Sri Madhwacharya's [GB] and [GTN] provides details of these additional aspects such as the proportion of the three qualities among living beings (humans, deities, and demons alike). For example, deities have a higher proportion of *sattv*. Sages have a mixture of *sattv* and *rajas*. Ancestral deities (*pitrus*) and heavenly musicians (*gandharvas*) have a mixture of *sattv* and *tama*s. The issue of categorization among deities based on their innate nature was addressed earlier in verse (10.6).

Categorization of Living Beings

ब्राह्मणक्षत्रियविशां शूद्राणां च परंतप ।
कर्माणि प्रविभक्तानि स्वभावप्रभवैर्गुणैः ॥ ४१ ॥

brāhmaṇakṣatriyaviśāṁ śūdrāṇāṁ ca paraṁtapa
karmāṇi pravibhaktāni svabhāvaprabhavair guṇaiḥ

O Parantapa! The natural attributes of the four categories of people - *Brahmanas* (those with knowledge of the Lord Almighty), *Kshatriyas* (the administrative class), *Vaishyas* (those involved in farming and commerce) and *Sudras* (those involved in the service sector) are governed by their innate nature. (18.41)

Comments: Previously in verse (4.13), the Lord had stated that He created four categories of people based on the innate nature of souls and their activities. It must be noted that one is not classified as such based on one's family of birth, as these classes are based on one's innate nature and talent. Details of the characteristics, attributes,

and activities of these four categories of people are described in the next few verses.

शमो दमस्तपः शौचं क्षान्तिरार्जवमेव च ।
ज्ञानं विज्ञानमास्तिक्यं ब्रह्मकर्म स्वभावजम् ।। ४२ ।।
śamao damas tapaḥ śaucaṁ kṣāntir ārjavam eva ca
jñānaṁ vijñānam āstikyaṁ brahmakarma svabhāvajam

शौर्यं तेजो धृतिर्दाक्ष्यं युद्धे चाप्यपलायनम् ।
दानमीश्वरभावश्च क्षात्रं कर्म स्वभावजम् ।। ४३ ।।
śauryaṁ tejo dhṛtir dākṣyaṁ yuddhe cāpy apalāyanam
dānam īśvarabhāvaś ca kṣātraṁ karma svabhāvajam

कृषिगोरक्षवाणिज्यं वैश्यकर्म स्वभावजम् ।
परिचर्यात्मकं कर्म शूद्रस्यापि स्वभावजम् ।। ४४ ।।
kṛṣigaurakṣyavāṇijyaṁ vaiśyakarma svabhāvajam
paricaryātmakaṁ karma śūdrasyāpi svabhāvajam

Firm faith in the Lord, control over sense organs, celibacy, purity (internal and external), tolerance, straightforwardness, scriptural and special knowledge (wisdom), and righteousness are the natural attributes of those with innate *brahminical* qualities. (18.42)

Valour, brilliance, bravery, diligence, not running away from justified conflict, charity, and excellence in administration, are the natural attributes of those with innate *kshatriya* qualities. (18.43)

Farming, animal (cow) welfare and commerce are the natural attributes of those with innate *vaishya* qualities. Service mindedness is the natural attribute of those with innate *sudra* qualities. (18.44)

Comments: These attributes are not absolute. Living beings normally have different proportions of these attributes. Sri Rayaru states the example of King Karthaveerya Arjuna who by profession was a *kshatriya* ruler but in fact had a higher proportion of *brahminical* qualities.

स्वे स्वे कर्मण्यभिरतः संसिद्धिं लभते नरः ।
स्वकर्मनिरतः सिद्धिं यथा विन्दति तच्छृणु ॥ ४५ ॥
sve sve karmaṇy abhirataḥ saṁsiddhiṁ labhate naraḥ
svakarmanirataḥ siddhiṁ yathā vindati tac chṛṇu

One who is involved in performing prescribed duties in life as per one's natural attributes will surely achieve liberation (through acquisition of direct, divine knowledge). Listen to the way such a person would attain liberation. (18.45)

Comments: The Lord clarifies in this verse that everyone is eligible for salvation (*moksha*) regardless of their societal category. Everyone can excel in their activities if they focus on performing prescribed duties.

यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।
स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः ॥ ४६ ॥
yataḥ pravṛttir bhūtānāṁ yena sarvam idaṁ tatam
svakarmaṇā tam abhyarcya siddhiṁ vindati mānavaḥ

श्रेयान् स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात् स्वनुष्ठितात् ।
स्वभावनियतं कर्म कुर्वन्नाप्नोति किल्बिषम् ॥ ४७ ॥
śreyān svadharmo viguṇaḥ paradharmot svanuṣṭhitāt
svabhāvaniyataṁ karma kurvan nāpnoti kilbiṣam

सहजं कर्म कौन्तेय सदोषमपि न त्यजेत् ।
सर्वारम्भा हि दोषेण धूमेनाग्निरिवावृताः ॥ ४८ ॥
sahajaṁ karma kaunteya sadoṣam api na tyajet
sarvārambhā hi doṣeṇa dhūmenāgnir ivāvṛtāḥ

The Lord pervades the universe and powers the activities of all beings. One who propitiates the Lord Almighty through the process of performing one's prescribed duties will achieve liberation. (18.46)

Even if imperfect, it is better for one to perform prescribed activities rather than perfectly perform activities prescribed to others. No one will be tainted with sin for performing the activities prescribed based on their innate nature. (18.47)

O Son of Kunti! One should not avoid performing prescribed activities, even if there are imperfections. Just like smoke covers fire, all activities will have some imperfections. (18.48)

Comments: In these verses, the Lord stresses on the importance of one focusing on performing one's prescribed duties. The primary motivation for the Lord's sermon to Arjuna is to convince Arjuna that he should engage in the just war to protect his citizens as that is his prescribed duty. Everyone has a specific role to play in society. Performing prescribed duties without expectations is the way for one to earn the Lord's grace. The Lord who owns everything in the universe has no expectations from anyone. There are many situations where one may not be able to perform one's prescribed duties perfectly. The Lord in verse (18.47) states that one should never abandon

one's prescribed duty. The Lord recognizes in verse (18.48) that no activity is ever perfect, just like fire is covered by smoke. As no one is perfect, no action can be perfect. Hence one should not avoid performing prescribed duties fearing imperfection. This concept was previously stated in verse (3.35).

Attributes Leading to Liberation

असक्तबुद्धिः सर्वत्र जितात्मा विगतस्पृहः ।
नैष्कर्म्यसिद्धिं परमां सन्न्यासेनाधिगच्छति ॥ ४९ ॥
asaktabuddhiḥ sarvatra jitātmā vigataspṛhaḥ
naiṣkarmyasiddhiṁ paramāṁ saṁnyāsenādhigacchati

One who submits all activities to the Lord, having no expectations, and acts with control over the mind overcoming temporary (worldly or heavenly) desires, will reach the sacred abode of the Lord. (18.49)

Comments: In verse (18.47), the Lord stated that one should focus on performing one's prescribed duties even if it cannot be done perfectly. In this verse, the Lord identifies the conviction that should accompany performance of such duties. Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies that one can overcome worldly desires (*asaktabuddhiḥ sarvatra*) by controlling one's mind (*jitātmā*). These are not independent actions but have a causal relationship (as sense control helps to overcome desires). In verse (18.45), the term *siddhi* was interpreted to mean *moksha*. In this verse, the word *naiṣkarmya* is used which also means *moksha*, and hence the word *siddhi* here is interpreted as the means to achieve *moksha*. The means are scriptural study, performing virtuous activities to exhaust *prarabdha*

*karm*a (consequences from accumulated deeds from one's prior births that must be experienced) etc.

The Path to Liberation

सिद्धिं प्राप्तो यथा ब्रह्म तथाऽऽप्नोति निबोध मे ।
समासेनैव कौन्तेय निष्ठा ज्ञानस्य या परा ॥ ५० ॥
siddhiṁ prāpto yathā brahma tathāpnoti nibodha me
samāsenaiva kaunteya niṣṭhā jñānasya yā parā

O Son of Kunti! The ultimate state of knowledge is spiritual fulfilment. Now, hear in brief from Me about the way a seeker achieves spiritual fulfilment and reaches the abode of Brahma. (18.50)

Comments: In the previous verse, the Lord had identified the approach for a seeker to attain the states that would lead one to liberation. This verse states that such a seeker would first reach Goddess Mahalakshmi, who would then recommend that the Lord should grant the seeker liberation (*moksha*). Sri Rayaru in [GV] clarifies that '*brahma*' stated in this verse refers to Goddess Mahalakshmi (*apara brahma*) and not to the four faced deity Brahma or the Lord (*para brahma*). The meaning of '*brahma*' is based on the context. The interpretation here is consistent with those in verses (14.3), (14.27) and (18.54). As this chapter is about renunciation and liberation, the Lord describes the sequential steps for attaining liberation (*moksha*) in detail. In verse (18.49), it was stated that one must be rid of the effects of all activities before being eligible to attain *moksha*. The next step is to attain the abode of Mahalakshmi, and finally reach the abode of the Lord (which is described in verses

(18.55) to (18.57)). Given this sequence of steps, it is also appropriate that Brahma in this verse is interpreted to mean Mahalakshmi.

बुद्ध्या विशुद्धया युक्तो धृत्याऽऽत्मानं नियम्य च ।
शब्दादीन् विषयांस्त्यक्त्वा रागद्वेषौ व्युदस्य च ॥ ५१॥
buddhyā viśuddhayā yukto dhṛtyātmānaṁ niyamya ca
śabdādīn viṣayāṁs tyaktvā rāgadveṣau vyudasya ca

विविक्तसेवी लघ्वाशी यतवाक्कायमानसः ।
ध्यानयोगपरो नित्यं वैराग्यं समुपाश्रितः ॥ ५२ ॥
viviktasevī laghvāśī yatavākkāyamānasaḥ
dhyānayogaparo nityaṁ vairāgyaṁ samupāśritaḥ

अहंकारं बलं दर्पं कामं क्रोधं परिग्रहम् ।
विमुच्य निर्ममः शान्तो ब्रह्मभूयाय कल्पते ॥ ५३ ॥
ahaṁkāraṁ balaṁ darpaṁ kāmaṁ krodhaṁ
parigraham vimucya nirmamaḥ śānto brahmabhūyāya kalpate

To achieve spiritual fulfilment, one must have the following characteristics: purity of mind, control over the mind with conviction, overcoming sense gratification, overcoming obsession and avarice, avoiding crowded places, eating in moderation, focusing the mind and the body on spiritual pursuits, meditating on the Lord, detaching from worldly matters, overcoming ego, arrogance, greed, pride, lust, anger and tranquility. (18.51) (18.52) (18.53)

Comments: As this final chapter is titled ‘Liberation and Renunciation’, in these verses the Lord summarizes

the characteristics of a seeker eligible to achieve liberation. These verses consolidate and summarize such characteristics which have been previously stated in many chapters.

Sri Vidyamanya Teertha's in [GPM] delineates the sequence of spiritual progress based on these characteristics as follows. One who performs prescribed duties as per one's innate nature and abilities without expectations will be able to achieve mental purity. This helps the seeker in controlling the mind and the sense organs. Detachment from sense objects helps one to overcome obsession and avarice. Such a seeker naturally prefers to be alone and avoid crowded places. Consuming *sattvic* food in moderation conditions the seeker to overcome emotions such as arrogance, greed etc., and withdraw from unnecessary worldly happenings. The seeker is now ready to focus the mind steadfastly on the Lord and meditate. This leads the seeker to develop deep devotion in the Lord and perform activities without any material expectations.

The Lord's Grace is Essential for Liberation

ब्रह्मभूतः प्रसन्नात्मा न शोचति न काङ्क्षति ।
समः सर्वेषु भूतेषु मद्भक्तिं लभते पराम् ॥ ५४ ॥
brahmabhūtaḥ prasannātmā na śocati na kāṅkṣati
samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu madbhaktiṁ labhate parām

One who has achieved spiritual fulfilment by reaching Goddess Mahalakshmi (eventually reaching the Lord) has neither cravings nor regrets and has a contented mind. Such a person treats everyone equally and is supremely devoted to Me (Lord Krishna). (18.54)

Comments: A seeker with the characteristics described in previous verses will treat everyone equally (seeing the same Lord in everyone) and will develop devotion to the Lord. This concept was earlier addressed in verse (5.18).

भक्त्या माम् अभिजानाति यावान् यश्चास्मि तत्त्वतः ।
ततो मां तत्त्वतो ज्ञात्वा विशते तदनन्तरम् ।। ५५ ।।
bhaktyā mām abhijānāti yāvān yaś cāsmi tattvataḥ
tato māṁ tattvato jñātvā viśate tadanantaram

सर्वकर्माण्यपि सदा कुर्वाणो मद्व्यपाश्रयः ।
मत्प्रसादादवाप्नोति शाश्वतं पदमव्ययम् ।। ५६ ।।
sarvakarmāṇy api sadā kurvāṇo madvyapāśrayaḥ
matprasādād avāpnoti śāśvataṁ padam avyayam

चेतसा सर्वकर्माणि मयि सन्न्यस्य मत्परः ।
बुद्धियोगमुपाश्रित्य मच्चित्तः सततं भव ।। ५७ ।।
cetasā sarvakarmāṇi mayi saṁnyasya matparaḥ
buddhiyogam upāśritya maccittaḥ satataṁ bhava

Any devotee who has understood, to the extent possible, My attributes such as My countless forms and My spatial, temporal pervasiveness in the universe will eventually attain My abode through the power of devotion. (18.55)

Such a person will offer all activities to Me while seeking refuge in Me. By My grace, that person will attain My abode which is permanent and imperishable. (18.56)

Offer all your activities to Me with mental conviction and understand that I am the Supreme One. Focus your

mind on Me and follow the path of spiritual knowledge. (18.57)

Comments: In these three verses the Lord indicates the reward for His devotees. They will achieve liberation because of their unflinching devotion to Him. The Lord expressly states that one can achieve liberation only through His grace. This indicates that while seekers choose many different paths for self-realization, ultimately it is only through the Lord's grace (*matprasādād*) that one can achieve everlasting bliss.

Sri Rayaru in [GV] explains the context for the use of the word '*matparaḥ'* in this verse. If performing Vedic rituals and submitting them to the Lord can guarantee liberation, is it possible that *trividyas* (those who only go by the superficial interpretations of the **Vedas** to propitiate other deities) can also achieve *moksha*? The Lord answers by including a qualifier in verse (18.57), in the form of '*matparaḥ'* which indicates the supremacy of the Lord Almighty. Hence, one must always have the conviction in the supremacy of the Lord to achieve liberation.

मच्चितः सर्वदुर्गाणि मत्प्रसादात्तरिष्यसि ।
अथ चेत्त्वमहंकारान्न श्रोष्यसि विनङ्क्ष्यसि ॥ ५८ ॥
maccittaḥ sarvadurgāṇi matprasādat tariṣyasi
atha cet tvam ahaṁkārān na śroṣyasi vinaṅkṣyasi

यदहंकारमाश्रित्य न योत्स्य इति मन्यसे ।
मिथ्यैष व्यवसायस्ते प्रकृतिस्त्वां नियोक्ष्यति ॥ ५९ ॥
yad ahaṁkāram āśritya na yotsya iti manyase
mithyaiṣa vyavasāyas te prakṛtis tvāṁ niyokṣyati

स्वभावजेन कौन्तेय निबद्धः स्वेन कर्मणा ।
कर्तुं नेच्छसि यन्मोहात् करिष्यस्यवशोऽपि तत् ॥ ६० ॥
svabhāvajena kaunteya nibaddhaḥ svena karmaṇā
kartuṁ necchasi yan mohāt kariṣyasy avaśopi tat

If you focus your mind on Me, you will overcome obstacles through My grace. If you ignore My words out of arrogance, you will perish. (18.58)

Out of ego and a sense of independence in activities, if you decide that you will not wage this war, your resolve will be broken. It is the Lord's will that you will engage in this war. (18.59)

O Son of Kunti! Out of your innate nature, bound by delusion (resulting from attachment to near and dear ones), if you try to avoid performing your prescribed duty (of waging this just war), you will be compelled to act even if you are not so inclined. (18.60)

Comments: After having described the philosophical principles related to prescribed duties, the Lord now gets back to the issue at hand, which is convincing Arjuna about the path forward. In these three verses, the Lord instructs Arjuna on the perils of not performing one's prescribed duties. The Lord had stated that one who focuses on performing prescribed duties will overcome obstacles through His grace. However, if Arjuna were to ignore the Lord's advice, he would experience downfall. The Lord goes a step further and informs Arjuna that he would wage the war even if he were not inclined to do so, as that was His will. Sri Vadiraja Teertha in [BGL]

provides another interpretation for the word '*avaśa*' in (18.60). This word also means 'one who is the under the control of the Lord' (as '*a*' means Lord and '*vaśa*' means 'under the control'). In this case, the context is that Arjuna will end up waging the war under the control of the Lord Almighty as that was His will.

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति ।
भ्रामयन् सर्वभूतानि यन्त्रारूढानि मायया ।। ६१ ।।
īśvaraḥ sarvabhūtānāṁ hṛddeśerjuna tiṣṭhati
bhrāmayan sarvabhūtāni yantrārūḍhāni māyayā

O Arjuna! The omnipotent Lord, residing in the hearts of all machine-like bodies of living beings, propels them to perform various activities through His own free will. (18.61)

Comments: In previous verses the Lord stated that one achieves liberation through His grace. In this verse, the Lord goes a step further and states that He is present in the hearts of all living beings and propels them into action. The Lord uses the word '*yantrā* ' (machine) to describe the physical bodies of living beings. Just as a machine relies on an engine for running, every physical body depends on its heart for proper functioning. The Lord states that He resides in the hearts of all living beings. This concept was also discussed in verse (15.15), where the Lord had stated that He resides in everyone's hearts.

Sri Vidyamanya Teertha in his [GPM] states that this single verse can be considered to contain the core principles of the entire **Gita** on the basis of the logic of '*sthalee pulaka nyaya*' (where one needs to examine only one grain of rice to verify if the entire pot of rice is cooked).

Devotion and Surrender

तमेव शरणं गच्छ सर्वभावेन भारत ।
तत्प्रसादात्परां शान्तिं स्थानं प्राप्स्यसि शाश्वतम् ।। ६२ ।।
tam eva śaraṇaṁ gaccha sarvabhāvena bhārata
tatprasādāt parāṁ śāntiṁ sthānaṁ prāpsyasi śāśvatam

O Bharata! Surrender only to Him completely. By His grace, you will develop deep faith and will ultimately reach the Lord's eternal abode which is full of infinite bliss. (18.62)

Comments: As indicated in the previous verse, the independent Lord causes everyone to act. Hence, it is important for one to get rid of ego and surrender to the Lord. Sri Rayaru in [GV] states that ' *śāśvatam*' (eternal) here refers to *Vaikunta*, the abode of the Lord which is embodied by Goddess Mahalakshmi. Also, in this verse, the Lord uses third person to indirectly refer to Himself. Sri Rayaru in [GV] based on Sri Madhwacharya's [GTN] states that the use of third person as opposed to using the first person clarifies the concepts much more forcefully.

इति ते ज्ञानमाख्यातं गुह्याद् गुह्यतरं मया ।
विमृश्यैतदशेषेण यथेच्छसि तथा कुरु ।। ६३ ।।
iti te jñānam ākhyātaṁ guhyād guhyataraṁ mayā
vimṛśyaitad aśeṣeṇa yathecchasi tathā kuru

I have imparted to you the most confidential of all confidential knowledge. Contemplate on this completely and do as you wish. (18.63)

Comments: At first glance, the Lord's concluding direction to Arjuna stated in '*yathecchasi tathā kuru*' seems to indicate that the Lord gave freedom to Arjuna to do as he wishes. Sri Rayaru in [GV] based on Sri Madhwacharya's [GTN] states that this a rhetorical direction from the Lord and is not to be interpreted literally. The real purport of this direction is to ask Arjuna if he will act against the Lord's teachings even after contemplating on them. This will be clear after a review of Arjuna's response in (18.73) where he states that he would act as per Krishna's words (*kariṣye vacanaṁ tava*) and not as per his own wishes.

सर्वगुह्यतमं भूयः शृणु मे परमं वचः ।
इष्टोऽसि मे दृढमिति ततो वक्ष्यामि ते हितम् ।। ६४ ।।
sarvaguhyatamaṁ bhūyaḥ śṛṇu me paramaṁ vacaḥ
iṣṭosi me dṛḍham iti tato vakṣyāmi te hitam

Listen to some more of this Supreme principle which is extremely confidential. I am continuing My supreme teaching to you as you are very dear to Me. (18.64)

Comments: After having concluded His teachings on the ways and means (*prameya* = principles) for one to traverse the spiritual path, the Lord now gives Arjuna the concrete steps (*sadhana* = actions) that he needs to take to achieve success here and hereafter. Previously in (12.20), the Lord had identified the characteristics of a devotee who is dear to Him. By declaring in this verse that Arjuna is dear to Him, the Lord is confirming that Arjuna has all the desirable traits of an ideal devotee.

The Ultimate Commandment

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।
मामेवैष्यसि सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे ।। ६५ ।।
manmanā bhava madbhakto madyājī māṁ namaskuru
mām evaiṣyasi satyaṁ te pratijāne priyosi me

As you are dear to Me, immerse your mind in Me. Place your devotion in Me. Propitiate only Me. Prostrate before Me. I promise you truthfully that you will reach My abode. (18.65)

Comments: The Lord instructs Arjuna to worship only Him with the four-way procedure – through the mind, through devotion, through propitiation and through salutation. By using the word '*satyaṁ*', the Lord is assuring Arjuna that there should not be any doubt in his mind about him achieving liberation.

Sri Madinur Vishnu Teertha in [BGS] has identified this verse as containing the essence of this entire chapter. Arjuna was asking for specific directions from Krishna as he was indecisive about the war. In this verse, the Lord specifically directs Arjuna to worship Him through the four-way procedure and confirms that Arjuna would achieve *moksha* following this path. Hence this verse can be considered as the core verse of this chapter (which is known as *moksha sanyasa yoga*).

सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ।। ६६ ।।
sarvadharmān parityajya māmekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja
ahaṁ tvā sarvapāpebhyo mokṣyayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ

Renounce all activities (not related to the Lord or performed with expectations of temporary rewards) completely and surrender exclusively to Me. I will liberate you from all your sins and grant you bliss. Do not lament. (18.66)

Comments: This is a continuation of the previous verse where the Lord had instructed Arjuna to engage in exclusive four-way worship of Him. One should not interpret '*sarvadharmān parityajya*' to mean that one should renounce all activities. The Lord had instructed Arjuna many times to focus on performing the prescribed duty of waging the war (verses (2.37), (4.42), (11.33)). Also, Sri Madhwacharya in [GB] reminds one that the Lord Himself had stated in verse (18.11) that renouncing activities (*tyaga*) mean relinquishing rewards from activities.

Sri Vidyesha Teertha in his book, **Prana Tattva in the Gita [GPH],** provides an alternate interpretation for this verse based on the word derivation of '*māmekaṁ*' as *ma* + *me* + *kam*, where *ma* = do not; *me* = to Me, *ka* = Vayudeva. In comments to verse (11.40), it was indicated that the word '*sarva*' also refers to the Lord Almighty (based on the Lord's attribute of omnipresence) and this interpretation is supported by Upanishads and **Vishnu Sahasra Nama**. Hence, *sarva dharma* refers to *Dharmic* activities related to the Lord. The reference to the deity Vayudeva here is in recognition of his status as supreme among all living beings (*jivas*). In comments to verse (1.31), Sri Rayaru in [GV] interpreted the word '*keshava*', referring to Lord Krishna as one who controls even deities '*ka*' (Brahma, Vayudeva) and '*isha*' (Rudra). Now, with the above word derivation for '*māmekaṁ*', verse (18.66)

can also be interpreted as follows – "Do not renounce *Dharmic* activities (related to the Lord), surrender to Vayudeva and Me. I will liberate you from all your sins and grant you bliss. Do not lament".

Eligibility for Studying the Gita

इदं ते नातपस्काय नाभक्ताय कदाचन ।
न चाशुश्रूषवे वाच्यं न च मां योऽभ्यसूयति ।। ६७ ।।
idaṁ te nātapaskāya nābhaktāya kadācana
na cāśuśrūṣave vācyaṁ na ca māṁ yobhyasūyati

Do not impart this knowledge to one who does not practice austerity. Never teach this to one who is not devoted to Me and to one who does not serve one's teachers. This should never ever be taught to one who has hatred towards Me. (18.67)

Comments: This verse identifies four characteristics of those who are unsuitable for receiving the teachings of the **Gita**. Sri Rayaru in [GV] provides an interesting interpretation for the use of the word '*cā*' (which means 'and') in this verse to relate these four characteristics. This word implies progressive harm in teaching the **Gita** to such categories of people. Teaching those who are not austere is harmful. Teaching those who do not serve teachers/elders is more harmful than teaching those who are not austere. Teaching those who are not devoted to the Lord is even more harmful than teaching those who do not serve teachers/elders. Finally, teaching those who have hatred towards the Lord is most harmful. The use of the word '*kadācana*' (meaning 'never') indicates that even if someone were to preach the **Gita** to those who may not be sufficiently austere or may not adequately serve their

elders/teachers, it should never be taught to those not devoted to the Lord.

Rewards for Spreading the Knowledge of the Gita

य इदं परमं गुह्यं मद्भक्तेष्वभिधास्यति ।
भक्तिं मयि परां कृत्वा मामेवैष्यत्यसंशयः ॥ ६८ ॥
ya imaṁ paramaṁ guhyaṁ madbhakteṣv abhidhāsyati
bhaktiṁ mayi parāṁ kṛtvā mām evaiṣyaty asaṁśayaḥ

न च तस्मान्मनुष्येषु कश्चिन्मे प्रियकृत्तमः ।
भविता न च मे तस्माद् अन्यः प्रियतरो भुवि ॥ ६९ ॥
na ca tasmān manuṣyeṣu kaścin me priyakṛttamaḥ
bhavitā na ca me tasmād anyaḥ priyataro bhuvi

One who imparts this highly secretive knowledge to My devotees will develop deep devotion in Me and will reach My abode. Let there not be any doubt in this. (18.68)

There is none dearer to Me among humans than one who imparts this knowledge to My ardent devotees. No one else in this world will be dearer to Me than such a person even in future. (18.69)

Comments: The Lord indicates that one who imparts the knowledge of the **Gita** is very dear to Him at the current time and will be so even in future. Such a person will develop deep devotion in the Lord and will ultimately reach Him. This is the power of learning, understanding, and then teaching the **Gita** to the faithful. The Lord specifically identifies those among humans (*manuṣyeṣu*) who are dearest to Him. Sri Rayaru in [GV] states that the intention of specifically identifying humans here is to

clarify that the deities also impart the knowledge of the **Gita** and they will be eligible for superior rewards.

Rewards for Studying the Gita

अध्येष्यते च य इमं धर्म्यं संवादमावयोः ।
ज्ञानयज्ञेन तेनाहम् इष्टः स्यामिति मे मतिः ॥ ७० ॥
adhyeṣyate ca ya imaṁ dharmyaṁ saṁvādam āvayoḥ
jñānayajñena tenāham iṣṭaḥ syām iti me matiḥ

It is My opinion that one who studies this noble conversation between us, is in fact, propitiating Me (Dharma) through the sacrificial ritual of spiritual knowledge. (18.70)

Comments: Studying the **Gita** also has its rewards. Sri Rayaru states in [GV] that the Lord also goes by the name of Dharma as He is the one who supports everyone and everything in this universe. Hence studying subjects related to the Lord is a means to realize the Lord.

Rewards for Listening to the Gita

श्रद्धावाननसूयश्च शृणुयादपि यो नरः ।
सोऽपि मुक्तः शुभान् लोकान् प्राप्नुयात् पुण्यकर्मणाम् ॥ ७१ ॥
śraddhāvān anasūyaś ca śṛṇuyād api yo naraḥ
sopi muktaḥ śubhāṁl lokān prāpnuyāt puṇyakarmaṇām

Those who listen to the **Gita** with faith and devotion and without envy towards the Lord will also be rid of sins. They will reach the most auspicious destination and will be in the company of exalted liberated souls. (18.71)

Comments: This verse describes the rewards for eligible seekers who listen to the great conversation (the

Gita). Sri Rayaru in [GV] draws attention to the use of the word '*api*' in this verse ('*api*' means 'also') which implies that those who listen to the **Gita** also achieve the higher worlds. So, it goes without saying that those who strive harder performing activities such as studying the **Gita** and teaching the **Gita** to devotees will reap even higher rewards such as exuberant bliss in *moksha*.

कच्चिदेतत् श्रुतं पार्थ त्वयैकाग्रेण चेतसा ।
कच्चिदज्ञानसंमोहः प्रनष्टस्ते धनञ्जय ॥ ७२ ॥
kaccid etac chrutaṁ pārtha tvayaikāgreṇa cetasā
kaccid ajñānasaṁmohaḥ pranaṣṭas te dhanaṁjaya

O Partha! Did you listen to My words with concentration? O Dhananjaya! Has the veil of delusion caused by ignorance been dispelled? (18.72)

Comments: After completing His detailed sermons and answering all of Arjuna's questions, the Lord asks Arjuna if all his doubts have been cleared. The Lord reiterates that Arjuna's delusion and doubts are a result of his ignorance and that He had answered all of his questions.

Arjuna's Reawakening

अर्जुन उवाच ।
नष्टो मोहः स्मृतिर्लब्धा त्वत्प्रसादान्मयाऽच्युत ।
स्थितोऽस्मि गतसन्देहः करिष्ये वचनं तव ॥ ७३ ॥
arjuna uvāca
naṣṭo mohaḥ smṛtir labdhā tvatprasādān mayācyuta
sthitosmi gatasaṁdehaḥ kariṣye vacanaṁ tava

Arjuna said:

O Achyuta! My delusion is dispelled. Through Your grace, my sense of duty has been restored. I stand with deep conviction, with all my doubts removed. I will execute Your command. (18.73)

Comments: In this verse Arjuna responds to Lord Krishna enthusiastically by stating that his delusion has dissipated, and he is now firmly convinced about his duty of waging the war to protect his citizens. There are three important points that must be noted here-

1. The Lord had asked Arjuna in the previous verse if he had listened to His sermon with attention and got all his doubts removed. Arjuna states that his doubts have been cleared because of the Lord's grace (*tvatprasādāt*). This implies that in addition to one's effort, one needs the Lord's grace to succeed in any venture.

2. Arjuna indicates that his sense of duty has been awakened. This implies that Arjuna (who is an incarnation of deity Indra and was well versed in divine knowledge) had knowledge about his prescribed duties, but that knowledge had been temporarily lost. Hence, he is stating that his memory of divine knowledge has returned (*smṛtir labdhā*)

3. In verse (18.63), it was stated that the Lord's concluding direction to Arjuna stated in '*yathecchasi tathā kuru*' was a rhetorical direction from Him. It was by no means granting Arjuna the freedom to do what he wished. In this verse, Arjuna does not state that he would act as per his wishes but that he would

act as per the Lord's words - '*kariṣye vacanaṁ tava*'. This confirms that the direction from Krishna to Arjuna in verse (18.63) was indeed rhetorical. Acting as per the Lord's words is the real meaning of *sharanagati* (surrender) indicated in (18.66).

Sanjaya's Euphoric Epilogue

संजय उवाच ।
इत्यहं वासुदेवस्य पार्थस्य च महात्मनः ।
संवादमिममश्रौषम् अद्भुतं रोमहर्षणम् ।। ७४ ।।
sañjaya uvāca
ity aham vāsudevasya pārthasya ca mahātmanaḥ
saṁvādam imam aśrauṣam adbhutam roma-harṣaṇam

व्यासप्रसादात् श्रुतवान् एतद् गुह्यमहं परम् ।
योगं योगेश्वरात् कृष्णात् साक्षात् कथयतः स्वयम् ।। ७५।।
vyāsaprasādāc chrutavān etad guhyam ahaṁ param
yogaṁ yogeśvarāt kṛṣṇāt sākṣāt kathayataḥ svayam

Sanjaya said:

Thus, I heard the amazing, unheard of, electrifying conversation between Vasudeva (Krishna) and Arjuna, the great souls. (18.74)

By the Grace of Lord Almighty Vedavyasa (another form of Krishna), I was able to directly listen to this most confidential spiritual discourse (*yoga*) from Lord Krishna Himself, the supreme Lord of *Yoga*. (18.75)

Comments: Sanjaya was granted Divine Vision by Lord Vedavyasa so that he could witness the happenings on the

battleground remotely and relay them to King Dhrutarashtra. Hence Sanjaya salutes Lord Vedavyasa here.

राजन् संस्मृत्य संस्मृत्य संवादमिममद्भुतम् ।
केशवार्जुनयोः पुण्यं हृष्यामि च मुहुर्मुहुः ।। ७६ ।।
rājan saṁsmṛtya saṁsmṛtya saṁvādam imam
adbhutam keśavārjunayoḥ puṇyaṁ hṛṣyāmi ca muhur muhu

तच्च संस्मृत्य संस्मृत्य रूपमत्यद्भुतं हरेः ।
विस्मयो मे महान् राजन् हृष्यामि च पुनःपुनः ।। ७७ ।।
tac ca saṁsmṛtya saṁsmṛtya rūpam atyadbhutaṁ hareḥ
vismayo me mahān rājan hṛṣyāmi ca punaḥ punaḥ

O King! By repeatedly recollecting this wonderful, sacred conversation between Lord Krishna and Arjuna, I am rejoicing again and again. (18.76)

O King! There is no end to my amazement as I recollect the wonderful Universal Form of Lord Almighty Sri Hari. I am repeatedly rejoicing. (18.77)

Comments: Sanjaya is repeatedly rejoicing, remembering the sacred conversation (the **Gita**) and the Universal Form of the Lord which he was also able to behold. He describes the event as yielding him '*puṇyaṁ*' (rewards hereafter). Previously in verse (11.10), Sanjaya had briefly described the wonderful, universal form of the Lord which he was also able to behold.

यत्र योगेश्वरः कृष्णो यत्र पार्थोधनुर्धरः ।
तत्र श्रीर्विजयो भूतिर्ध्रुवा नीतिर्मतिर्मम ।। ७८ ।।
yatra yogeśvaraḥ kṛṣṇo yatra pārthodhanurdharaḥ
tatra śrīr vijayo bhūtir dhruvā nītir matir mama

It is my firm belief that wherever there is the presence of Lord Krishna (the Lord of all *Yogas*) and Arjuna, the holder of the bow, there will be abundance of wealth, victory, glory, and everlasting justice. (18.78)

Comments: Sensing Dhrutarashtra's curiosity about the side that won the war, Sanjaya indirectly answers the king by stating that the side that has Krishna and Arjuna will always be victorious.

This verse can also be interpreted to indicate victory for the side that had the presence of Lord Krishna and Vayudeva. HH Sri Vidyasagara Madhava Teertha provides the following explanation for interpreting this verse as indicating primarily the presence of Vayudeva along with Lord Krishna.

* As the **Gita** is a direct teaching by Lord Krishna, only deity Vayudeva (who is superior most among the individual souls) has the ability to comprehend the teachings fully. Arjuna, who has an instance of Indra can receive the teachings in the **Gita** only because of special powers granted to him by Vayudeva. Sri Madhwacharya has stated in [MBTN], Chapter 12, verse 129 that Vayudeva had a special presence in Arjuna in the form of 'Veera'.

* In a conversation between the deity Hanuman (a direct incarnation of Vayudeva) and Bheema (another incarnation of Vayudeva) in the **Mahabharata**, Hanuman assures Bheema that during the Mahabharata war, he would be present on the flag of Arjuna's chariot and destroy the enemies by a mere roar. This is the reason for Arjuna being

referred to as '*kapi dwaja'* (verse 1.20). This incident is narrated by Sri Madhwacharya in [MBTN], chapter 22, verse 288.

* The phrase '*yatra pārthodhanurdharaḥ'* in this verse can also be derived as '*yatra pārtho adhanurdharaḥ',* where *partha* (son of Kunti) can be a reference to Bheema and *adhanurdharaḥ* is an adjective that can be applied to Bheema as one who can fight a war without any weapon (as *dhanus* means weapon).

* **Atharva Upanishat (4.5)** compares a bow to the primordial syllable *Om* (which is the root of all knowledge), the arrow to the mind of a seeker and the Lord Almighty to the target, implying that one must focus one's mind on the Lord using the wisdom of the **Vedas** to reach Him. Sri Madhwacharya is his commentary on **Taittireeya Upanishat**, interprets Bheema as the holder of all Vedic knowledge and hence the word '*dhanurdharaḥ*' (holder of bow) can be interpreted to mean Bheema [GPH].

Now, the verse (18.78) can also be interpreted as follows - It is my firm belief that wherever there is the presence of Lord Krishna (the Lord of all *Yogas*), and Vayudeva, there will be abundance of wealth, victory, glory, and everlasting justice.

अंतिम मङ्गल श्लोका:

पूर्णादोषमहाविष्णोर्गीतामाश्रित्य लेशतः ।

निरूपणं कृतं तेन प्रीयतां मे सदा विभुः ॥

pūrṇādoṣa mahavishno gītamāśritya leṣataḥ
nirūpaṇaṃ kṛtam tena preyataṃ me sadā vibhūḥ

Concluding Benedictory Verse (Gita Bhashya): Sri Madhwacharya concludes his **Gita Bhashya** with this verse: In this work on the **Gita**, we have described in brief, the defectless Lord Almighty Sri Vishnu who is full of infinite auspicious attributes. Let our Lord be pleased with us.

अशेषगुणपूर्णाय दोषदूराय विष्णवे ।
नमः श्रीप्राणनाथाय भक्ताभीष्टप्रदायिने ।।

aśeṣa guṇa pūrṇāya doṣa dūrāya viṣṇave
namaḥ śrī prāṇanāthaya bhaktābhīṣṭapradaayine

Concluding Benedictory Verse (Gita Vivruti): Sri Raghavendra Teertha concludes his **Gita Vivruti** with this verse: Salutations to the defectless Lord Vishnu who is full of infinite auspicious attributes, who is the Lord of Sri Mahalakshmi and Sri Vayudeva and who grants all auspicious wishes of His devotees.

Summary of Chapter 18

This chapter has 78 verses. The first 55 verses contain the conversation between Arjuna and Krishna regarding clarifications on concepts previously covered in other chapters. The Lord concludes His teaching in the next 17 verses. Arjuna thanks the Lord in the 73rd verse. The last 5 verses have concluding remarks from Sanjaya. Arjuna begins by asking Krishna what the difference between renunciation (*saṁnyāsa*) and relinquishment (*tyāga*) was, as both seem to imply the same. In verse (5.2), it was stated that renunciation (*sanyāsa*) was essential to attain liberation (*moksha*), and in verse (12.12), relinquishment (*tyāga*) was lauded as a superior means to attain liberation

(*moksha*). Arjuna wants to know about the relative merits of these two approaches. The Lord provides answers to Arjuna's questions with a detailed description of the various aspects of renunciation and relinquishment in verses (18.2) to (18.12). In chapter 5 (verses 14, 15) the concept of doership of activities was briefly described. This aspect is expanded in this chapter in verses (18.13) to (18.18). In chapter 2, verse 45, it was stated that a seeker must strive to understand the inner meanings of rituals indicated in the **Vedas** and not just accept the superficial meaning. This point is elaborated in this chapter. In chapter 14, the influence and impact of the three qualities of nature on living beings were discussed. In this chapter, additional aspects of the qualities of nature are elaborated in verses (18.19) to (18.39). Previously, in verse (4.13), the Lord identified the categorization of society based on the innate nature and activities of individuals. In this chapter, this concept is elaborated in verses (18.40) to (18.48). Verses (18.49) to (18.55) provide details of the methods for one to achieve salvation (*moksha*), as that is the goal of all living beings. Verses (18.68) to (18.71) describes the glory of the **Gita** (more details on Gita's glory appears in Annexure 1). Sanjaya concludes his commentary on the battleground to King Dhrutarashtra in verses (18.74) to (18.78) and indirectly answers the King's question about the side that won the war by stating that the side that has Lord Krishna and the warrior Arjuna will always be victorious.

।। इति अष्टादशोऽध्यायः ।।
End of Chapter 18

Annexure 1 – The Glory of the Gita

।। श्री गीतामाहात्म्यम् ।।

धरोऽवाच –

भगवान् परमेशान भक्तिरव्यभिचरिणी ।

प्रारब्भम् भुज्यमानस्य कथं भवति हे प्रभो ।। १ ।।

Dharovaacha:
Bhagavan parameshaana bhaktiravyabhichaarinee;
Praarabdham bhujyamaanasya katham bhavati he prabho.

विष्णुरुवाच –

प्रारब्भम् भुज्यमानो ही गीताभ्यासरतस्सदा ।

स मुक्तस्ससुखी लोके कर्मणा नोपलिप्यते ।। २ ।।

Sri Vishnuruvaacha:
Praarabdham bhujyamaano hi geetaabhyaasaratah sadaa;
Sa muktah sa sukhee loke karmanaa nopalipyate.

महापापादि पापानि गीताध्यानम् करोति चेत् ।

क्वचित् स्पर्शम् न कुर्वंति नलिनीदलमंबुवत् ।। ३ ।।

Mahaapaapaadipaapaani geetaadhyaanam karoti chet;
Kwachit sparsham na kurvanti nalineedalam ambuvat.

गीतायाः पुस्तकम् यत्र यत्र पाठः प्रवर्तते ।

तत्र सर्वाणि तीर्थानि प्रयागादीनि तत्र वै ।। ४ ।।

Geetaayaah pustakam yatra yatra paathah pravartate;
Tatra sarvaani teerthaani prayaagaadeeni tatra vai.

सर्वे देवाश्च ऋषयो योगिनः पन्नगाश्च ये ।

गोपाला गोपिका वाऽपि नारदोद्धवपार्षदैः ।। ५ ।।

Sarve devaashcha rishayo yoginahpannagaashcha ye;
Gopaalaa gopikaa vaapi naaradoddhava paarshadaih.

सहायो जायते शीघ्रम् यत्र गीता प्रवर्तते ।

यत्र गीताविचारश्च पठनम् पाठनम् श्रुतम् ।।

तत्राहम् निश्चितम् पृथ्वि निवसामि सदैव हि ।। ६ ।।

Sahaayo jaayate sheeghram yatra geetaa pravartate;
Yatra geetaavichaarashcha pathanam paathanam shrutam;
Tatraaham nishchitam prithvi nivasaami sadaiva hi.

गीताश्रयेऽहम् तिष्ठामि गीता मे चोत्तमम् मतम् ।

गीताज्ञानमुपाश्रित्य त्रीन् लोकान् पालयाम्यहम् ।। ७ ।।

Geetaashraye'ham tishthaami geetaa me chottamam griham;
Geetaajnaanam upaashritya treen Uokaan paalayaamyaham.

गीता मे परमा विद्या ब्रह्मरूपा न संशयः ।

अर्धमात्राक्षरा नित्या सानिर्वाच्यपदात्मिका ।। ८ ।।

Geetaa me paramaa vidyaa brahmaroopaa na samshayah;
Ardhamaatraaksharaa nityaa swaanirvaachyapadaatmikaa.

चिदानन्देन कृष्णेन प्रोक्ता स्वमुखतोऽर्जुनम् ।

वेदा त्रयी परानन्दा तत्त्वार्थज्ञानसम्युता ।। ९ ।।

Chidaanandena krishnena proktaa swamukhato'rjuna;
Vedatrayee paraanandaa tatwaarthajnaanasamyutaa.

योऽष्टादशजपो नित्यम् नरो निश्चलमानसः ।
ज्ञानसिद्धिम् स लभते ततो याति परम् पदम् ।। १० ।।

Yoashtaadasha japen nityam naro nishchalamaanasah;
Jnaanasiddhim sa labhate tato yaati param padam.

पाठेऽसमर्थः संपूर्णे ततोऽर्दम् पाठमाचरेत् ।
तदा गोदानजम् पुण्यम् लभते नात्र संशयः ।। ११ ।।
Paathe'asamarthah sampoornam tato'rdham paathamaacharet;
Tadaa godaanajam punyam labhate naatra samshayah.

त्रिभागम् पठमानस्तु गंगास्नानफलम् लभेत् ।
षडंशम् जपमानस्तु सोमयागफलम् लभेत् ।। १२ ।।

Tribhaagam pathamaanastu gangaasnaanaphalam labhet;
Shadamsham japamaanastu somayaagaphalam labhet.

एकाध्याम् तु यो नित्यम् पठते भक्तिसंयुतः ।
रुद्रलोकमवाप्नोति गणो भूत्वा वसेच्चिरम् ।। १३ ।।

Ekaadhyaayam tu yo nityam pathate bhaktisamyutah;
Rudralokam avaapnoti gano bhootwaa vasecchiram.

अध्यायम् श्लोकपादम् वा नित्यम् यः पठते नरः ।
स याति नरताम् यावन्मन्वंतरम् वसुंधरे ।। १४ ।।

Adhyaayam shlokapaadam vaa nityam yah pathate narah;
Sa yaati narataam yaavanmanwantaram vasundhare.

गीतायाः श्लोकदशकम् सप्त पञ्च चतुष्टयम् ।
द्वैत्रीनेकम् तदर्धम् वा श्लोकानाम् यः पठेन्नरः ।। १५ ।।
Geetaayaah shloka dashakam sapta pancha chatushtayam;
Dwautreenekam tadardhamvaa shlokaanaam yah pathennarah.

चन्द्रलोकमवाप्नोति वर्षाणामयुतम् ध्रुवम् ।
गीतापाठसमायुक्तो मृतो मानुषताम् व्रजेत् ।। १६ ।।
Chandralokam avaapnoti varshaanaam ayutam dhruvam;
Geetaapaathasamaayukto mrito maanushataam vrajet.

गीताभ्यासम् पुनः कृत्वा लभते मुक्तिमुत्तमाम् ।
गीते त्युच्चारसम्युक्तो म्रियमाणो गतिम् लभेत् ।। १७ ।।
Geetaabhyaasam punah kritwaa labhate muktim uttamaam;
Geetetyucchaarasamyukto mriyamaano gatim labhet.

गीतार्थश्रवणासक्तो महापापयुतोपि वा ।
वैकुंठम् समवाप्नोति विष्णुना सह मोदते ।। १८ ।।
Geetaarthashravanaasakto mahaapaapayuto'pi vaa;
Vaikuntham samavaapnoti vishnunaa saha modate.

गीतार्थम् ध्यायते नित्यम् कृत्वा कर्माणि भूरिशः ।
जीवन्मुक्तः स विज्ञेयो देहांते परमम् पदम् ।। १९ ।।
Geetaartham dhyaayate nityam kritwaa karmaani bhoorishah;
Jeevanmuktah sa vijneyo dehaante paramam padam.

गीतामाश्रित्य बहवो भूभुजो जनकादयः ।
निर्धूतकल्मषा लोके गीता याताः परम् पदम् ।। २० ।।
Geetaam aashritya bahavo bhoobhujo janakaadayah;
Nirdhootakalmashaa loke geetaa yaataah param padam.

गीतायाः पठनम् कृत्वा माहात्म्यम् नैव यः पठेत् ।
वृथापाठो भवेत्तस्य श्रम एव ह्युदाहृतः ।। २१ ।।
Geetaayaah pathanam kritwaa maahaatmyam naiva yah pathet;
Vrithaa paatho bhavet tasya shrama eva hyudaahritah.

एतन्माहात्म्यसंयुक्तं गीताभ्यासम् करोति यः ।
स तत्फलमवाप्नोति दुर्लभाम् गतिमाप्नुयात् ॥ २२ ॥
Etanmaahaatmyasamyuktam geetaabhyaasam karoti yah;
Sa tatphalamavaapnoti durlabhaam gatim aapnuyaat.

सूत उवाच –
माहात्म्यमेतद्गीताया मया प्रोक्तम् सनातनम् ।
गीतांते च पठेद्यस्तु यदुक्तं तत्फलम् लभेत् ॥ २३ ॥
Suta Uvaacha:
Maahaatmyam etad geetaayaah mayaa proktam sanaat-nam;
Geetaante cha pathedyastu yaduktam tatphalam labhet.

Summary: This passage which extols the virtues of the **Gita** is from the epic **Varaha Purana**. Goddess Dharadevi (the governing deity for earth) asks Lord Vishnu how human beings (earth dwellers) can realize the Lord when they are preoccupied with worldly afflictions. The Lord teaches her about the glory of the **Gita** which helps human beings navigate the river of worldly afflictions. The greatness of the **Gita** as stated by the Lord can be summarised as follows.

* Those who are engaged in the practice of reciting the **Gita** will not be entangled by their actions.

* The place where one finds books on the **Gita** or ongoing lectures on the **Gita** is said to be the home of all great, sacred rivers and pilgrimage centers.

* It is also the place where great sages and *yogis* reside. The Lord also resides there.

* The greatness of the **Gita** derives from the fact that they are the words of the Lord Himself in the form of Krishna, who is full of infinite auspicious attributes.

* One who recites and studies the **Gita** daily will attain liberation.

* One who utters the word ‘Gita’ at the time of leaving one’s body will reach the Lord.

* Even those who have sinned will be rid of their sins if they have read, analyzed, and understood the true meaning of the **Gita.** They too achieve salvation.

* Great emperors such as Janaka reached higher destinations due to their study of the **Gita.**

One must study the glory of the **Gita** after completing the study of the **Gita** for maximum benefit.

।। श्री गीतामाहात्म्यम् संपूर्णम् ।।
End of Glory of the Gita

Annexure 2 – The Bhagavad Gita: Philosophical Interpretation

The verses in the **Gita** have multiple meanings, each of them being consistent with the overall narrative. The first and the obvious interpretation is based on the historical meaning of the verses. Another subtle interpretation is based on the philosophical meaning of the verses. Sri Madhwacharya places a lot of importance on the philosophical aspects of the **Gita** by stating in his **Mahabharata Tatparya Nirnaya** (MBTN 2.146) that the **Mahabharata** is not just a historical account of the lives of the Pandavas and the Kauravas, it also is a deeply philosophical work. Sri Pangari Sreenivasacharya's **Gita Vivruti Adhyatma Artha** [GVAA] has examples of multiple interpretations of the verses in the **Gita**.

It is said that the **Bhagavad Gita** is an embodiment of *dharma* (the righteous way of living). This is further confirmed by reviewing the first letter of the first verse (1.1) – *dhar* and the last letter of the last verse (18.78) – *ma*. Thus, the **Gita**, which is encapsulated between the letters, *dhar* and *ma*, is an embodiment of *dharma*.

To illustrate the philosophical interpretation of the **Gita**, Sri Vidyasagara Madhava Teertha provides an interesting interpretation of the first and last verses which is summarized below-

धृतराष्ट्र उवाच –

धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे समवेता युयुत्सवः ।

मामकाः पाण्डवाश्चैव किमकुर्वत संञ्जय ।। १.१।।

dhṛtarāṣṭra uvāca
dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre samavetā yuyutsavaḥ
māmakāḥ pāṇḍavāś cai 'va kim akurvata sañjaya

The word *dhṛtarāṣṭra* is comprised of the words *dhṛta* and *rāṣṭra,* where *rāṣṭra* = worldly miseries and *dhṛta* = the one bearing. Hence, the name *dhṛtarāṣṭra* signifies all of us who are immersed in worldly afflictions. The name *sañjaya* is made up of root words *samyak* and *jayati* (the one who has soundly conquered worldly miseries). *dharmakṣetra* is based on the word *dharma* (derived from the word *dharana*, the one who protects, in other words the Lord Almighty). *kurukṣetra* refers to *kṣetra* with the qualifier *kuru* which refers to the one who is duty bound (as derived from the root word *kru* which indicates action). Hence *kurukṣetra* can mean a person's physical body. The word *māmakā* is used by Dhrutarashtra to mean 'my clan' where 'my' signifies ego which represents the demoniac forces in our bodies. In another interpretation, the word '*ma*' represents knowledge and *mamaka* means knowledge that is not evolved (or ignorance). The word *pāṇḍavā* is derived from root words *pari* and *gati* which means moving towards knowledge, and hence is a representation of the angelic forces in our bodies who embody knowledge (*jnana*). Thus, the Kauravas represent ignorance (*ajnana)* and the Pandavas embody knowledge (*jnana*).

With these interpretations, the first verse can now be translated as follows:

Dhrutarashtra (one who is enmeshed in worldly affliction) said -

O Sanjaya (the one who has soundly conquered worldly miseries)! In Kurukshetra (the physical body) which houses dharmakṣetra (the Lord Almighty), what was the outcome of the struggle (internal struggle) between my clan (demoniac forces represented by ignorance) and the Pandavas (angelic forces representing the knowledge)?

The central concept in the philosophical interpretation of verse (1.1) is about the internal struggle between the angelic and demoniac forces and its impact on one's activities.

Now, the philosophical interpretation of the last verse follows-

यत्र योगेश्वरः कृष्णो यत्र पार्थो धनुर्धरः ।
तत्र श्रीर्विजयो भूतिर्ध्रुवा नीतिर्मतिर्मम ।। १८. ७८ ।।
yatra yogeśvaraḥ kṛṣṇo yatra pārtho dhanurdharaḥ
tatra śrīr vijayo bhūtir dhruvā nītir matir mama

This verse is the concluding response by Sanjaya to King Dhrutarashtra's question in verse (1.1). Here, Lord Krishna is described as *yogeśvaraḥ* (the one who controls all paths and ways to achieve liberation) since He has described various paths such as *karma yoga, jnana yoga, dhyana yoga*, and *bhakti yoga* for a seeker to achieve liberation. Arjuna, an incarnation of the deity Indra with an instance of the serpent deity Sesha (*nara*) in him is knowledgeable about performing prescribed duties and represents living beings. With these interpretations, verse 18.78 can now be translated as follows-

All actions, where there is the presence of Lord Almighty Krishna (the Lord of all yogas), and Arjuna (a representative of all living beings), will through the Lord's grace result in great riches and success, eventually leading to liberation.

In summary, the first verse posed a question about the outcome of the internal struggle between demoniac forces (ignorance) and angelic forces (knowledge) within all living beings, and the last verse answers by stating that all actions where there is the presence of the Lord and Arjuna (one who is aware of prescribed duties) will succeed fully.

Annexure 3 – The Bhagavad Gita and Dvaita Vedanta

Sri Madhwacharya, the great saint, and philosopher of the 12th century was a proponent of Dvaita Vedanta (philosophy of theistic dualism) built on the foundational premise of the difference between individual souls and the Supreme Soul (the Lord Almighty). Sri Madhwacharya has composed over 37 works with seminal commentaries on the **Gita**, the **Vedas**, the **Upanishads**, the **Brahma Sutras**, and epics such as the **Ramayana** and the **Mahabharata**. In all his works, he quotes extensively from these scriptures. In fact, his very first literary work was his commentary on the **Gita** (**Gita Bhashya**). Sri Vyasa Teertha (16th century), a great philosopher and scholar from Sri Madhwa's lineage has summarized the philosophy of Sri Madhwacharya in a single verse, popularly known as *nava prameya* (the 9 tenets). In this section, the relationship between these nine tenets and the teachings from the **Gita** are described to emphasize the scriptural basis for Dvaita Vedanta.

Sri Vyasa Teertha's *Nava Prameya*

श्रीमन्मध्वमते हरिः परतरः सत्यं जगत् तत्त्वतो
भेदो जीवगणाः हरेरनुचराः नीचोच्चभावङ्गताः ।
मुक्तिर्नैजसुखानुभूतिरमलाभक्तिश्च तत्साधनं
ह्यक्षादित्रितयं प्रमाणमखिलाम्नायैकवेद्यो हरिः ।।

śrī manmadhva mate hariḥ parataraḥ satyaṃ jagat tattvato
bhedaḥ jīvagaṇāḥ hareranucarāḥ nīcocca bhāvaṃgatāḥ
muktirnaijasukhānubhūtiḥ amalā bhaktiśca tatsādhanam
hyakṣāditrityaṃ pramāṇam akhilāmnāyaikavedyo hariḥ

The Nine Tenets of Sri Madhwa's Philosophy

1. Lord Sri Hari is the Supreme Being
2. This world is real
3. The differences (between the Lord, individual souls, and inert objects) are real
4. Individual souls are under the control of Lord Sri Hari
5. Individual souls have gradation in attributes
6. Liberation is the ultimate experience of innate happiness
7. Pure devotion to the Lord leads to liberation
8. Direct knowledge, inference and scriptures are the evidence to establish the truth
9. The Lord is knowable through the **Vedas**

As will be seen, these nine principles are woven throughout the verses in the **Gita**. Following are some selected verses from the **Gita** to establish their correspondence with these nine tenets.

1. Supremacy of the Lord Almighty: Lord Sri Hari is the Supreme Entity

* Verse (7.7): The Lord states *mattaḥ parataraṁ nānyat kiṁcid asti* – there is no entity in the universe that is superior to Me.

* Verse (8.20): The Lord states *paras tasmāt tu bhāvonyo* – The Lord is the entity that is independent,

superior to and different from everything in the universe.

* Verse (15.16): The Lord states *uttamaḥ puruṣastvanyaḥ paramātmety udāhṛtaḥ* - the entity known as Paramatma is superior to and different from all other entities.

* Verse (11.43): Arjuna states *na tvatsamosty abhyadhikaḥ kutonyo* – there is no one equal to You (Krishna) in this universe. How can there be any one more superior?

2. Realism of the world: The world is real

* Verse (9.10): The Lord states *mayādhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ sūyate sacarācaram* – under My direct supervision, Mother Nature creates this world made of movable and immovable objects (The Lord uses the term *ādhyakṣa* which is derived from the word *akṣa* which means seeing. The Lord physically oversees the process of creation of the universe. As the Lord is real, so is the universe).

* Verse (11.7): The Lord states *ihaikastham jagat kṛtsnaṁ paśyādya sacarācaram* – look at the entire universe (*jagat*) situated in Me (The Lord grants Arjuna Divine vision to view the entire universe within Him).

* Verse (16.8): The Lord states *asatyam apratiṣṭhaṁ te jagadāhur anīśvaram*. They say that the world is unreal and is not dependent on the Lord Almighty (The Lord describes the characteristics of those with demoniac nature and states that they view the world

(*jagat*) as unreal, thereby clarifying the principle of the reality of the world).

3. The fivefold differences (*Pancha Bheda*) are real

The three entities in the universe, namely, the Lord Almighty, the individual souls, and inert objects are different from one another.

* Verse (13.22): *puruṣaḥ prakṛtistho hi bhuṅkte prakṛtijān guṇān*. Individual souls residing in the body, comprised of the elements of nature, experience emotions through contact with the three attributes of nature which are inert objects. This establishes the difference between individual souls and inert objects.

* Verse (13.31): *yadā bhūtapṛthagbhāvam ekastham anupaśyati*. The same Lord resides in multitudes of different (*pṛthak*) living beings. The entire 17th chapter is about the three types of intrinsic faith in living beings as indicated by the Lord in verse (17.2) *trividhā bhavati śraddhā dehināṁ sā svabhāvajā* - Living beings are predisposed based on their innate nature into one of three qualities - *sattvic*, *rajasic* or *tamasic*. This establishes the differences among individual souls.

* Verses (13.6) and (13.7) enumerated the different components of nature that impact an individual's personality. This establishes the differences among inert objects.

* Verse (7.4): *bhūmir āponalo vāyuḥ khaṁ mano buddhir eva ca| ahaṁkāra itīyaṁ me bhinnā prakṛtir aṣṭadhā||*. The Lord states - Earth, water, fire, wind,

space, mind, intellect, and individuation are the eight different parts of inert nature that are under My control. This establishes the difference between the Lord and inert objects, and among inert objects.

* Verse (15.16): The Lord states *uttamaḥ puruṣastvanyaḥ paramātmety udāhṛtaḥ* - the entity known as Paramatma is superior to and different from all other entities. This establishes the difference between the Lord and individual souls.

4. Individual souls are dependent on the Lord (they do not have independent doership - *kartṛtva*)

* Verse (5.14): The Lord states *na kartṛtvaṁ na karmāṇi* – living beings cannot act independently.

* Verse (15.9): The Lord states *śrotraṁ cakṣuḥ sparśanaṁ ca rasanaṁ ghrāṇam eva ca| adhiṣṭhāya manaś cāyaṁ viṣayān upasevate||* - The Lord resides in the sense organs - ears, eyes, skin, tongue, nose, and mind and verily consumes the (righteous) objects of sense pursuits. This clarifies that living beings are dependent on the independent Lord Almighty.

* Verse (18.61): The Lord *states īśvaraḥ sarvabhūtānāṁ hṛddeśerjuna tiṣṭhati| bhrāmayan sarvabhūtāni yantrārūḍhāni māyayā||* - O Arjuna! The omnipotent Lord, residing in the hearts of all living beings, propels them to perform various activities through His own free will. This further confirms that living beings are dependent on the independent Lord Almighty.

5. Individual souls have gradations

Individual souls have different innate capabilities and eventually attain different states.

* Verse (16.5): The Lord states *daivī saṁpad vimokṣāya* - Divine nature paves the way for levels of liberation. *vimokṣā* is derived as *vividha* + *mokṣā*, meaning different levels of bliss in liberation based on the innate abilities (*yogyata*) and efforts (*sadhana*) of souls.

* Verse (17.2): The Lord states *trividhā bhavati śraddhā dehināṁ sā svabhāvajā* - Living beings are predisposed based on their innate nature into one of three qualities - *sattvic*, *rajasic* or *tamasic*.

* Verse (3.42): The Lord states *indriyāṇi parāṇy āhur indriyebhyaḥ paraṁ manaḥ| manasas tu parā buddhir yo buddheḥ paratas tu saḥ||* - It is said that the sense organs are superior, and the mind is more superior to them. The intellect is superior to the mind and ultimate consciousness is even more superior to the intellect. Here the entities of the sense organs, the mind and the intellect refer to the respective governing deities. This establishes gradation among the deities.

6. Liberation is the ultimate state of innate happiness

* Verse (14.27): The Lord states *śāśvatasya ca dharmasya sukhasyaikāntikasya ca. Moksha* is defined as the state of pure, unending bliss.

* Verse (18.71): The Lord states *sopi muktaḥ śubhāṁl lokān prāpnuyāt puṇyakarmaṇām* – (the one who listens to our conversations) will be liberated and will be in the world of exalted, virtuous souls.

7. Pure devotion leads to liberation

* Verse (8.22) – The Lord states *puruṣaḥ sa paraḥ pārtha bhaktyā labhyas tv ananyayā* - The Supreme One is reachable only by pure, unadulterated devotion.

* Verse (11.54) – the Lord states *bhaktyā tv ananyayā śakya aham evaṁvidhorjuna* - Only by single minded devotion can one understand Me.

* Verse (12.20) – the Lord states *śraddadhānā matparamā bhaktās tetīva me priyāḥ* - One who observes these methods sincerely, with deep faith and devotion in Me, is indeed very dear to Me.

* Verse (18.68) – the Lord states *ya imaṁ paramaṁ guhyaṁ madbhakteṣv abhidhāsyati| bhaktiṁ mayi parāṁ kṛtvā mām evaiṣyaty asaṁśayaḥ||* - One who imparts this highly secretive knowledge to My devotees will develop deep devotion to Me and will reach My abode. Let there not be any doubt in this.

* Verse (14.26) – The Lord states *māṁ ca yovyabhicāreṇa bhaktiyogena sevate| sa guṇān samatītyaitān brahmabhūyāya kalpate||* - One who worships Me with pure, unalloyed devotion will indeed be able to reach beyond the three qualities and attain the abode of Mother Nature - Goddess Mahalakshmi (which is also My abode).

8. The three types of evidence are the sources of knowledge

The methods of obtaining true knowledge constitute a fundamental part of epistemology. Sri Madhwacharya defines the means of knowledge (*pramanas*) as *pratyaksha* (sense perception), *anumana* (inference) and *agama* (scriptural). *Pratyaksha* is the contact of a defectless sense organ with a defectless object. *Anumana* is defectless syllogism.A*agama* is defectless verbal composition (ex: **Vedas**).

* Verse (11.5): The Lord states *paśya me pārtha rūpāṇi śataśotha sahastraśaḥ| nānāvidhāni divyāni nānāvarṇākṛtīni ca||* The Lord asks Arjuna to see His infinite forms. The Lord had given Arjuna Divine Vision (which is defectless) with which Arjuna is able to see the Lord (who is defectless). This is an example of *pratyaksha pramana*.

* Verse (7.7): The Lord states *mayi sarvam idaṁ protaṁ sūtre maṇigaṇā iva* - Everything in the universe is supported by Me, just like a garland of pearls is supported by a string. When one sees a garland of pearls, the string which holds the pearls together is normally not visible. But one can infer the presence of the string as the pearls cannot hold themselves together. This is like inferring the presence of fire on a hill just by watching the smoke from a distance, as smoke will be visible only when there is fire. This is an example of *anumana pramana*.

* Verse (16.24): The Lord states *tasmāc chāstraṁ pramāṇaṁ te kāryākāryavyavasthitau* - Therefore,

scriptures are your guide in performing right deeds and avoiding wrong deeds. The Lord states that *shastram* (scriptures) are the *pramanas* (means) to understand right and wrong deeds. This is an example of *agama pramana*.

9. The Lord is knowable through the Vedas

* Verse (7.8): The Lord states *praṇavaḥ sarvavedeṣu* - I am the primordial syllable *Om* in the **Vedas**.

* Verse (15.15): The Lord states *vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyo* - I am the one exclusively described in all **Vedas**.

* Verse (15.18): The Lord states *atosmi loke vede ca prathitaḥ puruṣottamaḥ* - I am known as the Supreme Being and described as such in scriptures that are composed (*loka*) and revealed (***Vedas***).

References

1. The Bhagavad Gita [BG] by Sage Sri Vedavyasa – From Bheeshma Parva of Mahabharata
2. Gita Bhashya [GB] by Sri Madhwacharya-Commentary on the [BG]
3. Gita Tatparya Nirnaya [GTN] by Sri Madhwacharya – Conclusive treatise on the Gita
4. Prameya Deepika [PD] by Sri Jaya Teertha – Commentary on [GB]
5. Nyaya Deepika [ND] by Sri Jaya Teertha – Commentary on [GTN]
6. Prameya Deepika Bhava Deepa [PDBD] by Sri Raghavendra Teertha – Commentary on [PD]
7. Nyaya Deepika Bhava Deepa [NDBD] by Sri Raghavendra Teertha – Commentary on [ND]
8. Gita Vivruti [GV] of Sri Raghavendra Teertha (with Kannada Translation) by Scholars of Poornaprajna Vidyapeetha
9. Vishnu Tattva Vinirnaya [VTV] by Sri Madhwacharya
10. Mahabharata Tatparya Nirnaya [MBTN] by Sri Madhwacharya
11. Bhagavata Tatparya Nirnaya [BTN] by Sri Madhwacharya
12. Bhagavad Gita Saroddhara [BGS] by Sri Madinur Vishnu Teertha

13. Prameya Sangraha [PS] by Sri Raghavendra Teertha

14. Gita Vivruti Adhyatma Artha [GVAA] by Sri Pangari Sreenivasacharya

15. Bhagavata Maha Purana [BMP] by Sage Sri Vedavyasa

16. Gita Prasoona Mala [GPM] by Sri Vidyamanya Teertha

17. Gita Bhashya Bhava Pradeepika [GBBP] by Sri Padmanabha Teertha

18. Gita Bhashya Bhava Prakashika [GBBPN] by Sri Narahari Teertha

19. Bhagavad-Gita Lakshalankara [BGL] by Sri Vadiraja Teertha

20. Rukmineesha Vijaya [RV] by Sri Vadiraja Teertha

21. Bhava Ratna Kosha [BRK] by Sri Sumateendra Teertha

22. Prameya Deepika Bhava Bodha [PDBB] by Sri Raghuttama Teertha

23. Gita Pratipadartha Chandrika [GPC] by Sri Satyadhyana Teertha

24. Gita Saroddhara [GS] by Sri Vishwesha Teertha

25. Geeteyalli Prana Tatvada Hirime [GPH] by Sri Vidyesha Teertha

26. Sri Bhagavad-Gita (Kannada Bhavanuvada) [BKB] by Dr. V. Prabhanjnacharya

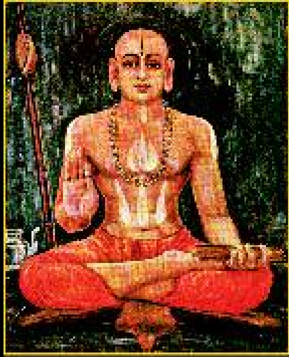
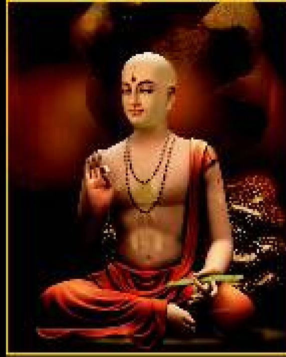
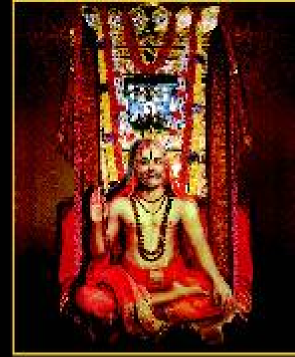
27. Gita Madhu [GM] by Dr. V. Prabhanjnacharya

28. Outlines of the Philosophy of Sri Madhwacharya [OPM] by Prof. B.A. Krishnaswamy Rao

29. The Bhagavad Gita [TB] by C.H. Srinivasa Murthy

30. Sri Bhagavad-gita (first chapter) [SBG] by Dr. Bannanje Govindacharya

* * * *



The Bhagavad Gita, a divine conversation between Lord Krishna and Prince Arjuna, set in the middle of a battlefield, has been the foremost spiritual guidebook for mankind for many centuries. This 700-verse work in Sanskrit is one of the most translated and commented upon scriptures in the world. The Gita is part of the great Hindu epic, the Mahabharata. The fact that the Mahabharata was composed by Sage Veda Vyasa, another incarnation of the Lord Almighty renders it authentic. One of the finest interpretations of the Gita was composed by the 12th century ascetic and proponent of the dualistic theism school, Sri Madhwacharya. More works in the same school of thought were written by Sri Jaya Teertha and other seers. Sri Raghavendra Swamy, the 16th century ascetic and scholar combined the key concepts in the commentaries of Sri Madhwacharya and Sri Jaya Teertha in his Gita Vivruti. This book attempts to provide a simple translation of the Gita in English, along with a summary of the explanation from Gita Vivruti based on lectures by His Holiness Sri Vidyasagara Madhava Teertha.

ISBN 978-81-928503-4-4

www.upanishat.com



